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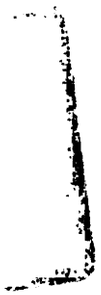

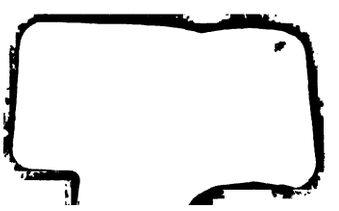

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OF

# SOPHOCLES,

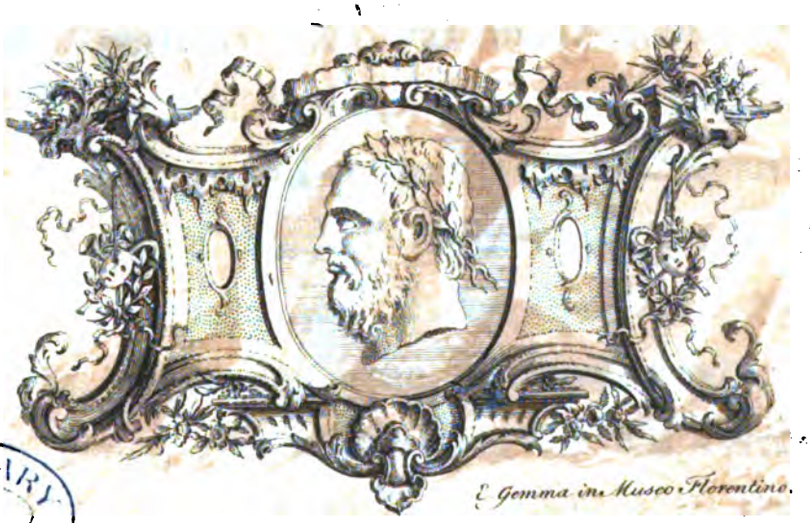
From the GREEK;

By THOMAS FRANCKLIN, M. A.

Fellow of Trinity-College, and Greek Professor in the University of Cambridge.

VOL. I.

Nulla Sophocleo veniet jactura cothurno.

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TOME I.

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LONDRES:

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TO HIS

ROYAL HIGHNESS

THE

# PRINCE of WALES.

May it pleaſe your Royal Highneſs,

ANTIENT tragedy in it's pure and perfect ſtate was made ſubſervient only to the nobleſt purpoſes, and ſacred to truth, religion and virtue. This ſpecies of the drama attain'd to it's higheſt degree of perfection in the time, and under the direction of the immortal Sophocles, the acknowledged prince of tragic poets, the admiration of all Greece, the envy of his cotemporaries, and in a word, the Shakeſpear of antiquity.

# DEDICATION.

SUCH is the work, and ſuch the author, which I have the honour to preſent to your ROYAL HIGHNESS. That a writer ſo univerſally applauded, ſhould never yet have been ſeen in an Engliſh habit (for the diſguiſes, which he has hitherto worn, are not worthy of that name) is certainly a matter of aſtoniſhment; but Sophocles ſeems purpoſely to have waited for the preſent happy opportunity of making his firſt appearance amongſt us, under the patronage of your ROYAL HIGHNESS; a circumſtance, which has made him ample retribution for all our former ſlight and neglect of him. The author of the following ſheets, though conſcious of his own inabilities, and the difficulty of the taſk which he has undertaken, approaches your ROYAL HIGHNESS with confidence, as ſatisfy'd that the ſame kindneſs and humanity, which induced your ROYAL HIGHNESS to accept theſe volumes, will alſo

pardon

pardon their errors and imperfections; and at the ſame time flatters himſelf that the reſt of his readers will pay ſome deference to ſo illuſtrious an example.

YOUR ROYAL HIGHNESS will pardon me, if, with my warmeſt acknowledgments on this occaſion, I take the liberty to mingle my hearty congratulations on this day's ſolemnity: the world of letters, and the circle of arts and ſciences, have a peculiar intereſt in every thing that concerns their patron and protector: permit me therefore in their name to wiſh your ROYAL HIGHNESS that health, happineſs and proſperity, on which their own muſt in a great meaſure depend: permit me to wiſh that Britain under your ROYAL HIGHNESS's influence may become the darling ſeat of taſte and genius, the throne of literature, and the conſtant reſidence of honour, freedom,

piety

piety and virtue: this, may it pleaſe your ROYAL HIGHNESS, is the wiſh, this is the well-founded hope of all, and of none more truly, firmly, and ſincerely, than

May it pleaſe your ROYAL HIGHNESS,

Your ROYAL HIGHNESS's

moſt devoted, obliged,

and obedient ſervant,

June, 4th, 1759.

Thomas Francklin.

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ON, or before the first of November next, will be publish'd,

# A DISSERTATION ON THE ANTIENT TRAGEDY;

Which will be deliver'd (Gratis) to the Subscribers to this Work, who are desired to send for it, as soon as printed, to R. FRANCKLIN, in Russel-street, Covent-garden.

# ERRATA.

## VOL. I.

PAGE 19, l. 11, for *inſpired*, read *inſpir'd*. p. 123, l. 1. after quick, omit the comma. p. 184, in the note, after therefore, for *was*, read *were*. p. 216, for p. 116 read 216.

## VOL. II.

PAGE 24, l. 2, after *ears*, omit the comma. p. 106, in the note, for πολεοι, read πολιοι, and for *Euſtatheus* read *Euſtathius*. p. 120, before l. 1, inſert DEIANIRA. p. 162, l. 1, for *darts* read *ſtarts*. p. 203, l. 2, after *accurs'd* put a comma. p. 210, after *prophet* inſert [Exeunt. p. 374, l. 3, for *ſeek* read *ſeeks*.

# AJAX.

# Dramatis Perſonæ.

MINERVA.

ULYSSES.

AJAX.

TECMESSA, wife of Ajax.

TEUCER, brother to Ajax.

AGAMEMNON.

MENELAUS.

MESSENGER.

CHORUS,

Compoſed of antient men of Salamis.

# AJAX.

## ACT I.

### SCENE I.

*A field near the tent of* AJAX.

MINERVA, ULYSSES.

MINERVA.

SON of Laertes, thy unweary'd ſpirit
Is ever watchful to ſurpriſe the foe;
I have obſerv'd thee wand'ring midſt the tents
In ſearch of Ajax, where his ſtation lyes,
At th' utmoſt verge, and meas'ring o'er his ſteps
But late impreſs'd; like Sparta's hounds of ſcent



*Sparta's hounds, &c.* The dogs of Sparta, according to all the beſt authors of antiquity, were remarkable for their ſwiftneſs and quick ſcent; Virgil mentions the veloces Spartæ catulos; Gratius Faliſcus alſo takes notice of them. Our countryman Shakeſpear, therefore, we ſee had good authority for his recommendation of Theſeus's hounds, who he tells us

Were of the Spartan kind,
So flew'd, ſo ſanded, *&c.* See his Midſummer night's dream.

Sagacious, doſt thou trace him, nor in vain;
For know, the man thou ſeek'ſt is not far from thee;
Yonder he lyes, with reeking brow and hands
Deep-ſtain'd with gore; ceaſe then thy ſearch, and tell me
Wherefore thou com'ſt, that ſo I may inform
Thy doubting mind, and beſt aſſiſt thy purpoſe.

ULYSSES.

Minerva, deareſt of th' immortal pow'rs,
For, tho' I ſee thee not, that well-known voice
Doth like the Tyrrhene trump awake my ſoul,
Right haſt thou ſaid, I come to ſearch my foe,
Shield-bearing Ajax; him alone I ſeek:
A deed of horror hath he done this night,

If

*Tho' I ſee thee not, &c.* It was the acknowledged and indiſputable privilege of heathen gods and goddeſſes to be viſible and inviſible, as they thought proper, and likewiſe to extend, whenever they pleaſed, that privilege to others; in the two firſt ſcenes of Ajax we have inſtances of both; in the firſt, Minerva is not ſeen by Ulyſſes, and in the ſecond, Ulyſſes, by the power of Minerva, is render'd inviſible to Ajax. The reaſon of the latter is ſufficiently evident; for the former it is not ſo eaſy to aſſign any, as the goddeſs had deſcended on purpoſe to converſe with her favourite; to conceal herſelf therefore from his ſight ſeems unaccountable.

*Shield-bearing Ajax, &c.* The greater Ajax is diſtinguiſh'd by Homer, from whom Sophocles copies his character, for his enormous ſhield, which none but himſelf was able to lift; in the ſeventh book of the Iliad we find it thus deſcribed.

Stern Telamon behind his ample ſhield,
As from a brazen tow'r, o'erlook'd the field;
Huge was its orb, with ſev'n thick folds o'ercaſt
Of tough bull-hides, of ſolid braſs the laſt. POPE.

If it be he, for yet we are to know
The certain proof, and therefore came I here
A willing meſſenger: the cattle all,
Our flocks and herds, are with their ſhepherds ſlain.
To Ajax ev'ry tongue imputes the crime;
One of our ſpies who ſaw him on the plain,
His ſword ſtill reeking with freſh blood, confirm'd it:
Inſtant I fled to ſearch him, and ſometimes
I trace his footſteps, which again I loſe
I know not how; in happy hour thou com'ſt
To aid me, goddeſs; thy protecting hand
Hath rul'd me ever, and to thee I truſt
My future fate.

MINERVA.

I know it well, Ulyſſes,
And therefore came to guard and to aſſiſt thee
Propitious to thy purpoſe.

ULYSSES.

Do I right,
My much-lov'd miſtreſs?

MINERVA.

Doubtleſs; his foul deed
Doth well deſerve it.

ULYSSES.

What cou'd prompt his hand
To ſuch a deſp'rate act?

MINERVA.

Achilles' arms;
His rage for loſs of them.

ULYSSES.

But wherefore thus
Deſtroy the flock?

MINERVA.

'Twas in your blood he thought
His hands were ſtain'd

ULYSSES.

Againſt the Græcians then
Was all his wrath?

MINERVA.

And fatal had it prov'd
To them, if I had not prevented it.

ULYSSES.

What daring inſolence cou'd move his ſoul
To ſuch a deed?

MINERVA.

Alone by night he wander'd
In ſecret to attack you.

ULYSSES.

Did he come

Cloſe to our tents?

MINERVA.

Ev'n to the double portal,

Where reſt your chiefs.

ULYSSES.

What pow'r cou'd then withhold

His madd'ning hand?

MINERVA.

I purpoſely deceiv'd

His ſight, and ſav'd him from the guilty joy,
Turning his rage againſt the mingled flocks,
Your gather'd ſpoil; on theſe with violence
He ruſh'd, and ſlaughter'd many; now he thought
That he had ſlain th' Atridæ, now believ'd
Some other chiefs had periſh'd by his hand.
I ſaw his madneſs and ſtill urg'd him on,
That he might fall into the ſnare I laid:
Tired with his ſlaughter now he binds in chains
The living victim, drives the captive herd
Home to his tent, nor doubts but they are men:

There beats with many a ſtripe the helpleſs foe.
But I will ſhew thee this moſt glaring phrenzy,
That to the Græcians what thy eyes beheld
Thou may'ſt report: be confident, nor fear
His utmoſt malice; I ſhall turn his ſight
Aſkant from thee. Ajax, what ho! come forth,
Thou who doſt bind in chains thy captive foes,
Ajax, I ſay, come forth before the portal.

ULYSSES.

What woud'ſt thou do, Minerva? Do not call him.

MINERVA.

What ſhou'd Ulyſſes fear?

ULYSSES.

O! by the Gods
I do intreat thee, let him ſtay within.

MINERVA.

But wherefore? Thou haſt ſeen him here before.

ULYSSES.

*There beats with many a Stripe, &c.* In alluſion to this circumſtance, the title of the play in the original is Αιας Μαστιγοφορος, or, Ajax the whip-bearer; ſo call'd either by Sophocles himſelf, or ſome of the antient commentators, to diſtinguiſh it from Ajax the Locrian, another tragedy written by him, but now loſt. As the appellation of whip-bearer, however happily adapted to an Attic, might not ſo well ſuit the delicacy of an Engliſh ear, I have taken the liberty to ſink it upon my readers, who, I apprehend, will be content with the title of Ajax only. Mr. Brumoy for the ſame reaſon has omitted it, and calls it, in his tranſlation, Ajax furieux.

ULYSSES.

He ever was, and is my deadlieſt foe.

MINERVA.

O! but to laugh an enemy to ſcorn
Is mirth moſt grateful.

ULYSSES.

I had rather ſtill
He come not here.

MINERVA.

And art thou then afraid
To ſee a madman?

ULYSSES.

I ſhou'd little dread
The ſight of Ajax in his better mind.

MINERVA.

He will not ſee thee be thou e'er ſo near.

ULYSSES.

Impoſſible! his eyes are ſtill the ſame.

MINERVA.

But I ſhall throw a veil of darkneſs o'er them.

ULYSSES.

By pow'rs immortal all things may be done.

MINERVA.

Wait then in ſilence till he come.

ULYSSES.

ULYSSES.

I will;

And yet 'twere better to retire.

MINERVA.

What ho!

Ajax, again I call thee, wherefore pay'ſt thou
So little rev'rence to thy guardian pow'r?

## SCENE II.

AJAX, MINERVA, ULYSSES.

AJAX.

Hail to the daughter of great Jove! to thee,
Minerva, hail! thou com'ſt in happy hour,
For I will crown thee with the golden ſpoils
Which I have gain'd by thy aſſiſting hand.

MINERVA.

*'Twere better to retire, &c.* Sophocles has cloſely copied his great maſter, Homer, in the character of Ulyſſes, who is drawn by them both as a man of extraordinary prudence and circumſpection, with more caution than courage, and more cunning than generoſity. He is extremely loth, we may obſerve, to truſt himſelf with Ajax, even though he had a goddeſs to protect him. I had rather, ſays he, after all, be a little farther off. Hic (ſays Camerarius in a note on this paſſage) eſt timor prudentiæ, this is but a prudent fear, for who would wiſh to meet a madman? Brumoy, however, is of another opinion; il me paroit (ſays he) un peu lache, & J'avoue que ce trait n'éſt pas à la louange d'Ulyſſe ni de Sophocle; mais le roi d' Ithaque etoit trop connu pour le deguiſer aux ſpectateurs, & les idées de prudence & de bravoure étoient alors bien differentes de celles d' àujourd'huy. To ſay the truth, prudence amongſt the antients ſeems to have ſavour'd a little of cowardice, as their courage and valour border'd rather too cloſely on ſavageneſs and brutality.

MINERVA.

Well haſt thou ſpoke; but ſay, has Ajax dip'd
His ſpear in Græcian blood?

AJAX.

It is my boaſt;
I'll not deny it.

MINERVA.

Did th' Atridæ feel
Thy vengeful arm?

AJAX.

They never will again
Diſhonour Ajax.

MINERVA.

If I underſtand thee,
They are both dead.

AJAX.

They are; now let 'em come,
And take my arms away.

MINERVA.

But tell me, Ajax;
Laertes' ſon, hath he eſcap'd thy wrath?

AJAX.

Talk'ſt thou of him, that fox accurs'd?

MINERVA.

I mean

Thy foe, Ulyſſes.

AJAX.

O! he is my captive,

The faireſt of my ſpoils, I have him here;

He ſhall not periſh yet.

MINERVA.

What 'vantage then

Mean'ſt thou to draw from his confinement?

AJAX.

Firſt,

I'll have him bound to th' pillar.

MINERVA.

And, what then

Wou'dſt thou inflict?

AJAX.

His limbs all purpled o'er

With many a bloody ſtripe; he ſhall be ſlain.

MINERVA.

Do not torment him, thus.

AJAX.

In all things elſe,

Minerva, wou'd I gratify thy will,

But this, and this alone muſt be his fate.

MINERVA.

MINERVA.

Since 'tis ſo pleaſing to thee, be it ſo,
Nor quit thy purpoſe.

AJAX.

I muſt to my work;
Thus, great Minerva, may'ſt thou ever ſmile
Propitious on me, and aſſiſt thy Ajax.

[Exit.

## SCENE III.

MINERVA, ULYSSES.

MINERVA.

Behold, Ulyſſes, here the mighty ſtrength
Of pow'r divine: liv'd there a man more wiſe,
More fam'd for noble deeds than Ajax was?

ULYSSES.

None, none indeed; alas! I pity him;
Ev'n in a foe I pity ſuch diſtreſs,
For he is wedded to the worſt of woes:
His hapleſs ſtate reminds me of my own,



*Since 'tis ſo pleaſing to thee.* The Greek is, επειδη σοι τερψις, which literally tranſlated, anſwers to our phraſe, ſince it is thy pleaſure: but this is generally made uſe of by us from an inferior to a ſuperior, and conſequently would be improper from Minerva to Ajax, where it is the direct contrary: ſhe only means to ſay, ſince it gives thee ſuch extraordinary delight and ſatisfaction; which ſenſe I have endeavour'd to expreſs as conciſely as poſſible in the tranſlation.

And tells me that frail mortals are no more
Than a vain image and an empty ſhade.

MINERVA.

Let ſuch examples teach thee to beware
Againſt the Gods thou utter aught profane:
And if perchance in riches or in pow'r
Thou ſhin'ſt ſuperior, be not inſolent;
For, know, a day ſufficeth to exalt
Or to depreſs the ſtate of mortal man:
The wiſe and good are by the Gods belov'd,
But thoſe, who practice evil, they abhor.

[Exeunt.

CHORUS.

I.

To thee, O! Ajax, valiant ſon
Of illuſtrious Telamon,

Monarch

*To thee, O! Ajax.* The chorus is form'd, with great propriety, of Salaminian ſoldiers, the countrymen and followers of Ajax, who having heard the report, already ſpread through the army, of Ajax's madneſs, and the ſlaughter of the cattle, expreſs the deepeſt concern for their unhappy maſter. If the fact aſſerted was true, ſuch, ſay they, was the will of the gods who had deprived him of his ſenſes; he is therefore to be pitied, not condemn'd: if, (as they are rather inclined to believe) it was only a ſtory invented by the artful Ulyſſes, on purpoſe to calumniate him, it behoved the hero immediately to appear, and contradict it: of this, interſperſed with moral reflections, conſiſts the firſt chorus, which according to the commentators was, a ſong between the acts; the French call it, intermede: the chorus before us is made up, in the original, of anapæſts, with a ſtrophe, antiſtrophe, and epode: I have thrown the whole into one irregular ode of eight ſtanzas, and divided them as the change of ſentiment ſeem'd to point out and direct me; whether it be done properly muſt be left to the determination of the reader.

Monarch of the ſea-girt iſle,
Fair Salamis, if fortune ſmile
On thee, I raiſe the tributary ſong,
For praiſe and virtue ſtill to thee belong:
But when, inflicted by the wrath of Jove,
Græcian ſlander blaſts thy fame,
And foul reproach attaints thy name,
Then do I tremble like the fearful dove.

II.

So, the laſt unhappy night,
Clamours loud did reach mine ear
And fill'd my anxious heart with fear,
Which talk'd of Græcian cattle ſlain,
And Ajax madd'ning o'er the plain,
Pleas'd at his prey, rejoycing at the ſight.

III.

Thus falſe Ulyſſes can prevail,
Whiſp'ring to all his artful tale,
His tale alas! too willingly receiv'd;

Whiſſt

*If fortune ſmile.* The original is σε μεν ευ πρασσοντ', quando bene tecum agitur: ſo we ſay a man *does well*, when he ſucceeds in the world.

*Laſt unhappy night.* Gr. της φθιμενης νυκτος, the night that is periſh'd; a remarkable Greek idiom.

Whilſt thoſe who hear are glad to know
And happy to inſult thy woe,
For, who aſperſe the great are eaſily believ'd.

IV.

The poor, like us, alone are free
From the darts of calumny,
Whilſt envy ſtill attends on high eſtate:
Small is the aid which we can lend,
Without the rich and pow'rful friend;
(The great ſupport the low, the low aſſiſt the great.
But 'tis a truth which fools will never know;)
From ſuch alone the clamours came
Which ſtrove to hurt thy ſpotleſs fame,
Whilſt we can only weep, and not relieve thy woe.

V.

Happy to 'ſcape thy piercing ſight,
Behold them wing their rapid flight,
As trembling birds from hungry vultures fly,
Sudden again ſhou'dſt thou appear,
The cowards wou'd be mute with fear,
And all their cenſures in a moment dye.

VI.

Cynthia, goddeſs of the grove,
Daughter of immortal Jove,

To whom at Tauris frequent altars riſe,
Indignant might inſpire the deed,
And bid the guiltleſs cattle bleed,
Depriv'd of incenſe due, and wonted ſacrifice.
Perhaps, ſad cauſe of all our grief and ſhame!
The god of war with brazen ſhield,
For fancy'd injuries in the field,
Might thus avenge the wrong, and brand thy name.

VII.

For never in his perfect mind,
Had Ajax been to ill inclin'd,
On flocks and herds his rage had never ſpent;
It was inflicted from above:
May Phœbus and all-powerful Jove
Avert the crime, or ſtop the puniſhment!
If to th' Atridæ the bold fiction came
From Siſyphus' deteſted race,

No

*To whom at Tauris &c.* Ταυροπολαν, id eſt, Taurivagam vocant Dianam (ſays Camerarius) vel quod in Taurica culta fuerit, vel propter terriculamenta nocturna Hecates, vel neſcio quam ob cauſam, that is, they call Diana Ταυροπολα, either becauſe ſhe was worſhip'd at Tauris, or becauſe of the nocturnal incantations of Hecate, or for I know not what reaſon (which by the bye is an excellent way of ſolving the difficulty); the firſt reaſon however is moſt probably the true one, which I have therefore adopted in the tranſlation.

*From Siſyphus' deteſted race.* Or, in other words, from Ulyſſes, whom the chorus means to reproach as the baſtard ſon of Siſyphus; concerning which circumſtance

No longer, Ajax, hide thy face,
But from thy tents come forth, and vindicate thy fame.

VIII.

Ajax, thy too long repoſe
Adds new vigor to thy foes,
As flames from aiding winds ſtill fiercer grow;
Whilſt the looſe laugh, and ſhameleſs lye,
And all their bitter calumny,
With double weight oppreſs, and fill our hearts with woe.

circumſtance, the antients, who had perhaps as well as ourſelves a little taſte for ſcandal, tell the following tale; Anticlea, the mother of Ulyſſes, in her journey towards her betroth'd huſband, Laertes, was violently ſeized on by Siſyphus, king of Corinth, and deflower'd by him. Ulyſſes was ſuppoſed to have been the fruit of this ſtolen embrace, though Laertes, who afterwards marry'd the lady, was obliged to educate him as his own. There is likewiſe another ſtory, to be met with in the ſcholia, of her being proſtituted to Siſyphus by her father Autolycus. Both Æſchylus and Euripides mention the baſtardy of Ulyſſes; Sophocles alſo repeats it in the Philoctetes.

End of ACT I.

ACT

# ACT II.

## SCENE I.

TECMESSA, CHORUS.

TECMESSA.

SONS of Erectheus, of Athenian race,
Ye brave companions of the valiant Ajax,
Oppreſs'd with grief behold a wretched woman
Far from her native ſoil appointed here
To watch your hapleſs lord, and mourn his fate.

CHORUS.

What new misfortune hath the night brought forth?
Say, daughter of Teleutas, for with thee



*Sons of Erectheus &c.* The Athenians, who were remarkably proud of their antiquity, ſtiled themſelves, χθονιοι or αυτοχθονοι, as ſprung from the Earth; the original natives of that ſpot, and coeval with the ſoil they inhabited. Erectheus is reported to have been the offspring of Vulcan, and the Earth; from him the Athenians boaſted their deſcent, and they could not well go higher: Salamis was not far from Athens; Sophocles therefore ſalutes the followers of Ajax by the name of Athenians, and takes this opportunity to indulge the vanity of his countrymen, by calling them the ſons of Erectheus; for joining the inhabitants of Salamis to the Athenians, Sophocles had the authority of Homer;

> With theſe appear the Salaminian bands,
> Whom the gigantic Telamon commands;
> In twelve black ſhips, to Troy they ſteer their courſe,
> And with the great Athenians join their force.
>
> POPE's Homer, B. 2. L. 670.

*Daughter of Teleutas &c.* Tecmeſſa, who is here introduced as the wife of Ajax, fell to him, as Briſeis to Achilles, by the fate of war: her father, Teleutas,

His captive bride, the noble Ajax deigns
To ſhare the nuptial bed, and therefore thou
Can'ſt beſt inform us.

TECMESSA.

How ſhall I declare
Sadder than death th' unutterable woe!
This night, with madneſs ſeiz'd, hath Ajax done
A dreadful deed; within thou may'ſt behold
The tents o'erſpread with bloody carcaſes
Of cattle ſlain, the victims of his rage.

CHORUS.

Sad news indeed thou bring'ſt of that brave man,
A dire diſeaſe! and not by human aid
To be remov'd; already Greece hath heard
And wond'ring crouds repeat the dreadful tale:
Alas! I fear th' event! I fear me much,

Leſt

Teleutas, was a petty king in Phrygia, whoſe dominions being taken and plunder'd by Ajax, the daughter became his captive, and was afterwards advanced to his bed, in quality, we may ſuppoſe, of his chief ſultana; by her, we find, he had a child whom the father named Euryſaces, from ευρυς σακος, a broad ſhield, in memory of that part of his own armour, by which, as we before obſerved, he was ſo eminently diſtinguiſh'd; this child is afterwards brought on the ſtage, a circumſtance artfully introduced by the poet, to heighten the diſtreſs of the piece. Horace, in his catalogue of famous miſtreſſes, has not forgot our heroine,

Movit Ajacem Telamone natum,
Forma captivæ dominum Tecmeſſæ. Lib. 2. Od. 4.

Left with their flocks and herds the ſhepherds ſlain,
Againſt himſelf he lift his murth'rous hand.

TECMESSA.

Alas! this way he led his captive ſpoils,
And ſome he ſlew, and others tore in ſunder;
From out the flock two rams of ſilver hue
He choſe, from one the head and tongue divided,
He caſt them from him; then the other chain'd
Faſt to the pillar, with a doubled rein
Bore cruel ſtripes, and bitt'reſt execrations,
Which not from mortal came, but were inſpired
By that avenging god who thus torments him.

CHORUS.

Now then, my friends, (for ſo the time demands)
Each o'er his head ſhou'd caſt the mournful veil,
And inſtant fly, or to our ſhips repair,
And ſail with ſpeed; for dreadful are the threats
Of the Atridæ; death may be our lot,
And we ſhall meet an equal puniſhment
With him whom we lament, our frantic lord.

TECMESSA.

He raves not now; but like the ſouthern blaſt,
When lightnings ceaſe and all the ſtorm is o'er,
Grows calm again; yet to his ſenſe reſtor'd,

He feels new griefs; for, O! to be unhappy,
And know ourſelves alone the guilty cauſe
Of all our ſorrows, is the worſt of woes.

CHORUS.

Yet if his rage ſubſide we ſhou'd rejoice;
The ill remov'd, we ſhou'd remove our care.

TECMESSA.

Hadſt thou then rather, if the choice were giv'n,
Thyſelf at eaſe, behold thy friend in pain,
Than with thy friend be join'd in mutual ſorrow?

CHORUS.

The double grief is ſure the moſt oppreſſive.

TECMESSA.

Therefore, tho' not diſtemper'd, I am wretched.

CHORUS.

I underſtand thee not.

TECMESSA.

The noble Ajax,
Whilſt he was mad, was happy in his phrenzy,
And yet the while affected me with grief
Who was not ſo; but now his rage is o'er,
And he has time to breathe from his misfortune,
Himſelf is almoſt dead with grief, and I
Not leſs unhappy than I was before;
Is it not doubled then?

CHORUS.

CHORUS.

It is indeed;
And much I fear the wrath of angry heav'n,
If from his madneſs ceas'd he yet receive
No kind relief.

TECMESSA.

'Tis ſo; and 'twere moſt fit
You knew it well.

CHORUS.

Say then how it began;
For like thyſelf we feel for his misfortunes.

TECMESSA.

Since you partake the ſorrows of a friend,
I'll tell you all: know then, at dead of night,
What time the evening tapers were expir'd,
Snatching his ſword, he ſeem'd as if he meant
To roam abroad, I ſaw and chid him for it;
What woud'ſt thou do, I cry'd, my deareſt Ajax?
Unaſk'd, uncall'd for, whither woud'ſt thou go?
No trumpet ſounds to battle, the whole hoſt
Is wrap'd in ſleep; then did he anſwer me
With brief but ſharp rebuke, as he was wont;
Woman, thy ſex's nobleſt ornament
Is ſilence; thus reprov'd, I ſaid no more;

Then forth he ruſh'd alone, where, and for what,
I knew not; but returning, he brought home
In chains the captive herd, in pieces ſome
He tore, whilſt others bound like ſlaves he laſh'd
Indignant; then out at the portal ran,
And with ſome ſhadow ſeem'd to hold diſcourſe;
Againſt th' Atridæ, and Ulyſſes oft
Wou'd he inveigh; or, laughing loud, rejoice
That he had ta'en revenge for all his wrongs;
Then back he came; at length, by ſlow degrees,
His phrenzy ceas'd; when ſoon as he beheld
The tents o'erwhelm'd with ſlaughter, he cry'd out,
And beat his brain; roll'd o'er the bloody heaps
Of cattle ſlain, and tore his clotted hair,
Long fix'd in ſilence: then, with horrid threats
He bad me tell him all that had befall'n,
And what he had been doing; I obey'd,
Trembling with fear, and told him all I knew.
Inſtant he pour'd forth bitt'reſt lamentations,
Such as I ne'er had heard from him before,

For

*With ſome ſhadow &c.* This alludes to his converſation with Minerva, in the firſt act; Tecmeſſa, we may ſuppoſe, was in a chamber adjoining to them, and overheard their diſcourſe. But as Minerva had render'd both herſelf and Ulyſſes inviſible, Tecmeſſa could not imagine whom he was talking to; ſhe adds this circumſtance therefore to the other ſymptoms of his madneſs. There is a paſſage not unlike this in Hamlet. See Act 3. Sc. 10.

For grief like that, he oft wou'd say, betray'd
A weak and little mind, and therefore ever
When ſorrow came, refrain'd from loud complaint,
And, like the lowing heifer, inly mourn'd.
But ſinking now beneath this ſore diſtreſs,
He will not taſte of food or nouriſhment;
Silent he ſits, amid the ſlaughter'd cattle,
Or, if he ſpeaks, utters ſuch dreadful words
As ſhew a mind intent on ſomething ill.
Now then, my friends, for therefore came I hither,
O! if ye have the pow'r aſſiſt me now;
Perhaps ye may; for oft th' afflicted man
Will liſten to the counſels of a friend.

CHORUS.

O! daughter of Teleutas, horrible
Indeed thy tidings are of noble Ajax,
Thus raving, and thus miſerable.

[AJAX within groans.]

Oh!

TECMESSA.

*He will not taſte of food.* The abſtinence of Ajax on this occaſion, which, we may imagine, was not peculiar to himſelf, ſeems to be among thoſe cuſtoms which the Grecians borrow'd from the eaſtern nations: we read in ſcripture, that when David was afflicted for the loſs of his child, he would not eat bread, nor drink wine; it appears from this, and many other paſſages in Sophocles, that he was no ſtranger to the manners and phraſeology of the orientals; though I would not, on this occaſion, venture to affirm, that David and Sophocles were but one perſon, in imitation of my learned predeceſſor, Duport, who ſo poſitively aſſerted, that Homer and Solomon were the ſame.

TECMESSA.

Louder you'll hear him ſoon; mark'd ye, my friends,
How deep his groans?

AJAX within.

O! me!

CHORUS.

He ſeems to rave,
Or mourns reflecting on his madneſs paſt.

AJAX within.

Boy, boy!

TECMESSA.

Alas! he calls Euryſaces,
Where art thou, child? What wou'd he have with thee?

AJAX within.

Teucer, 'tis thee I call, where art thou, Teucer?
Still muſt he chace his prey, whilſt Ajax dyes?

CHORUS.

He ſeems of perfect mind—open the doors,
Let him come forth, who knows but ſight of us
May keep him ſo.

TECMESSA.

I'll open them——now ſee
[The doors are thrown open, and Ajax diſcover'd]
Your maſter there, and judge of his condition.

SCENE

## SCENE II.

### AJAX, TECMESSA, CHORUS.

AJAX.

My dear companions, who alone deſerve
The name of friends, ye ſee the dreadful ſtorm
How it o'erwhelms me.

CHORUS. [aſide to TECMESSA.]

What thou ſaid'ſt, alas!
Was but too true, he ſeems indeed diſtracted.

AJAX.

My fellow-ſailors! whoſe aſſiſting hand
Ply'd the tough oar, and led me thro' the main,
From you alone can I expect to meet



*My dear companions, &c.* From line 347 to line 427 of the original, inſtead of the common metre, it is all ſtrophe and antiſtrophe, which was moſt probably ſet to muſic and ſung in the manner of the chorus: this was often done by Sophocles and the other tragic writers in the more pathetic and impaſſion'd parts of the drama, and met, as we may imagine, with a favourable reception in the Grecian theatre; but as queſtion and anſwer put into ode or rhime would have a different effect amongſt us, I have preſerved the blank verſe in this and ſome other parallel paſſages, as more proper for dialogue.

*Seems indeed diſtracted.* Ajax is here repreſented as ſitting alone in his tent juſt recover'd from his delirium, and reflecting with horror on what he had done during the continuance of it: what the chorus here obſerves concerning his diſtraction doth not therefore proceed from any thing which he ſays, but, probably, from a wildneſs in his looks and geſture which ſtill remain'd, and induced them to believe that his diſtemper was not quite removed. Ajax, indeed, as Brumoy obſerves, ſeems throughout this whole ſcene like the ſea after a ſtorm, whoſe waves are ſtill agitated, and ſubſiding by degrees into calmneſs and tranquillity.

Or love or friendſhip; therefore ſhew it now,
And kill me.

CHORUS.

Talk not thus, nor thus increaſe
By added woes thy dreadful malady.

AJAX.

Doſt thou behold this once intrepid Ajax,
The brave, the mighty, long for ſtrength renown'd
And dauntleſs courage in the bloody field,
Doſt thou behold him? O what laughter now,
What vile reproach muſt he ſuſtain?

TECMESSA.

O Ajax,
My lord, my maſter, do not talk thus ſadly.

AJAX to TECMESSA.

Wilt thou not home? Wilt not be gone?

TECMESSA.

Oh me!

CHORUS.

Be patient; by the Gods let me intreat you.
Be more compos'd.

AJAX.

*Wilt thou not home, &c.* The mind of Ajax is ſo diſturb'd that he returns the tenderneſs of his wife with peeviſhneſs and anger. I have endeavour d in the tranſlation to render it with that brevity and ſharpneſs which paſſion generally makes uſe of. The ladies may obſerve the modeſty of Tecmeſſa's behaviour; ſhe anſwers him only with a ſigh.

A J A X.

Wretch that I was, to let
The curſt Atridæ ſcape, and ſhed the blood
Of harmleſs cattle!

C H O R U S.

But why ſorrow thus
For what is paſt, and cannot be recall'd?

A J A X.

How will that ſubtle inſtrument of ill,
Laertes' prying ſon, inſult me now,
And ſmile at my misfortunes!

C H O R U S.

That muſt be
As ſeems moſt fitting to the Gods; from them
Or grief or joy muſt flow.

A J A X.

O wou'd to heav'n
That I cou'd ſee him! wretched as I am!

C H O R U S.

This is no time for boaſting: ſee'ſt thou not
How very weak thou art?

A J A X.

Almighty Jove,

My great progenitor! O grant me this!
Grant me to ſlay that hateful, talking ſlave,
With the proud princes; then well pleas'd myſelf
Shou'd periſh laſt.

TECMESSA.

O! if thou pray'ſt for death,
Pray too for mine; for wherefore ſhou'd I live
When thou art gone?

AJAX.

O darkneſs, my beſt light
And hope! O wrap me in your friendly ſhade
A willing gueſt! I dare not look for help,
Or from the Gods above, or men below:
The pow'rful daughter of eternal Jove
To death devotes me: whither can I fly,
Or where remain, my fame and glory loſt
In this ſad phrenzy? left without a friend,
And the whole army bent on my deſtruction!

TECMESSA.

Alas! how dreadful 'tis to hear ſuch words,
Which Ajax never wou'd have ſpoke before!

AJAX.

*Jove, my great progenitor!* Ajax's genealogical table ſtands thus: Ajax was the ſon of Telamon, the ſon of Æacus, the ſon of Jove. Jupiter therefore was his great grandfather.

AJAX.

Ye well-known floods that roll into the main,
Ye caves and foreſts by the rocky ſhore!
Years heap'd on Years faſt by the walls of Troy
Have ye detain'd me, but no longer now
Amongſt the living ſhall ye ever ſee
The hapleſs Ajax; this remember all:
Nor ſhall thy neighb'ring waves, Scamander, ſtill
To Greece beneficent, behold me more:
Troy never ſaw, forgive the boaſtful word,
A braver, nobler foe than Ajax was,
Tho' now diſhonour'd thus, and thus oppreſs'd.

CHORUS.

I wou'd not have thee thus lament thy woes,
And yet I know not how to chide thee for it,
So hard thy lot.

AJAX.

Who wou'd have thought my name
Wou'd e'er ſo well have ſuited my condition!

O

*Who wou'd have thought my name, &c.* To know the meaning of this paſſage, the reader ſhould underſtand Greek; it being nothing more than a poor pun on the name of Ajax, which in the original begins with *ai*, an exclamation like our Oh! expreſſive of pain and ſorrow. It is, to ſay the truth, not very worthy of Sophocles, and much of a piece with Shakeſpear's,

——————This is Rome indeed,
And room enough. JUL. CÆSAR.

But

O! I have reaſon to lament indeed,
For ſure there is not ſuch a wretch as Ajax!
Long ſince at Troy my valiant father fought,
And to his native land with glory crown'd
Bore back the meed of his diſtinguiſh'd virtues:
Nor leſs renown'd for gallant deeds was once
His hapleſs ſon, tho' now he periſh thus
Inglorious: yet Achilles, well I know,
Were he alive, and to beſtow his arms
On him who beſt deſerv'd the prize, to me
And me alone wou'd judge the great reward:
But little deem'd th' Atridæ worth like mine,
And therefore gave them to that vile impoſtor,
Author of ev'ry evil work, Ulyſſes.
Had not my mind been wrought on by ſome pow'r
Superior, and my eyes averted from them,
They had not liv'd to give another ſentence;
But Jove's great daughter, the invincible,
The dreadful Pallas, turn'd my arm aſide,
Juſt rais'd againſt them, and inſpir'd me thus,
With horrid rage to dip my murth'rous hand
In blood of guiltleſs cattle: they mean time

Smile

But our Author is not often guilty of this, and ſhould therefore be pardon'd for it. Ovid, who loved trifling, has alſo play'd upon the name of Ajax. See Met. Lib. 13.

*To lament.* Another pun; the word αιαζειν ſignifying to lament.

Smile at the danger ſcap'd, and triumph o'er me.
But when the Gods oppoſe us, valour bends
To cowardice, and ſtrength to weakneſs yields:
What then can Ajax? hateful to the Gods,
By Troy deteſted, and by Greece forſaken?
Shall I go leave the Atridæ here alone
To fight their cauſe, and ſeek my native land?
But how ſhall I appear before my father?
How will he bear to ſee his Ajax thus
Spoil'd of his honours! he who ever crown'd
With glory ſits; it muſt not, can not be.
What if I ruſh amid the Trojan hoſt,
And with my ſingle arm oppoſe them all,
Do ſomething noble, and as nobly periſh?
But that wou'd pleaſe th' Atridæ, therefore never
Shall it be done: No. I will do a deed
To ſhew my father that I ſtill deſerve
The name of ſon, and emulate my ſire:
When life but teems with unremitted woes,
'Tis poor in man to wiſh a longer date:
For what can day on day, and year on year
But put off wiſh'd-for death, and lengthen pain?
Of little worth is he who ſtill depends
On fruitleſs hope; for it becomes the brave

To live with honour, or to die with glory.
Ye have my thoughts.

CHORUS.

Thoughts not unworthy of thee,
Ajax; but quit, O! quit thy horrid purpoſe,
And yield thee to thy friends.

TECMESSA.

My lord, my maſter,
My deareſt Ajax, dreadful are the ills
Which cruel fortune brings on human kind:
Of nobleſt race (a better Phrygia boaſts not)
Tecmeſſa was, and from a father ſprung
Happy and free, tho' now a wretched ſlave;
For ſo the Gods and thy all-conq'ring arm
Decreed: but ſince partaker of thy bed,
Thou know'ſt I ever have with tend'reſt care
Watch'd o'er thee: therefore, by domeſtic Jove,
Here I intreat thee, by the ſacred tye
That binds us, let me not with foul reproach

And

*My lord, my maſter, &c.* This ſpeech of Tecmeſſa's has been deſervedly applauded by the critics as one of the moſt maſterly and pathetic in the whole tragedy. Ce ne ſont pas (ſays Brumoy) de ces ſentimens delicats & recherchéz qu'on a mis depuis à la mode ſur le théâtre; ce ſont les expreſſions vives de l'amitié conjugal. This ſcene, as well as that which follows between Ajax and his ſon, is manifeſtly imitated from the parting of Hector and Andromache in the 6th book of Homer's Iliad, to which I refer my readers. The copy is not, perhaps, much inferior to the original.

And bitter ſcorn be taunted by thy foes,
When they ſurround me, as I know they will:
For O! when thou ſhalt die, that very day
The Greeks with violence will ſeize on me;
Tecmeſſa then and thy lov'd ſon ſhall eat
The bread of ſlav'ry; then ſome haughty lord
Inſulting loud, ſhall cry, behold the wife
Of Ajax, once the pride of all our hoſt,
How is ſhe fall'n! from envy'd happineſs,
To ſervitude and woe! ſuch vile upbraidings
Oft ſhall I hear, on thee and on thy race
Caſting foul ſhame: O! then relent, my Ajax;
Think on thy father in the vale of years,
Think on thy aged mother, who with vows
Inceſſant prays the Gods to ſend thee back
Safe to thy native land: pity thy ſon,
Without a father in his tender youth
To form his mind, left to th' unfriendly hands
Of thoſe who love him not: Alas! what woes
Wilt thou bequeath to me and to thy child!
I have no hope, no ſtay but thee alone.
Thy hand deſtroy'd my country, and my mother;



*The bread of ſlav'ry.* This is literally tranſlated; the expreſſion is much in the ſtile of the ſcriptures, where we meet with the bread of ſorrow, the bread of wickedneſs, the bread of ſincerity, and the like.

Death ſnatch'd my father to the realms below;
Depriv'd of thee what country will receive me,
Or where ſhall I ſubſiſt? Thou art my all,
My only ſafe-guard: do not, do not leave me!
Nought ſo becomes a man as gratitude
For good receiv'd, and noble deeds are ſtill
The offspring of benevolence, whilſt he
With whom remembrance dies of bleſſings paſt
Is vile and worthleſs.

CHORUS.

O! that thou cou'dſt feel
Pity like mine for this unhappy woman!
Then wou'dſt thou ſay her words deſerve thy praiſe.

AJAX.

And prais'd ſhe ſhall be if ſhe but perform
What I require.

TECMESSA.

In all will I obey thee,
My deareſt Ajax!

AJAX.

I wou'd ſee my child;
Let him be brought.

TECMESSA.

I hid him from thy ſight
Becauſe of——

AJAX.

AJAX.

My diſtemper, was it not?

TECMESSA.

It was: I fear'd indeed thou might'ſt deſtroy him.

AJAX.

And well thou might'ſt: a deed like that became
My ſad condition.

TECMESSA.

Therefore to prevent it
I kept him from thee.

AJAX.

I approve thy caution.

TECMESSA.

What wou'dſt thou have me do?

AJAX.

Let me behold
And ſpeak to him.

TECMESSA.

He is not far from hence,
The ſervants have him in their care.

AJAX.

Then why
May I not ſee him?

TECMESSA.

Boy! thy father calls thee:
Let ſome one bring him hither.

AJAX.

Is he coming,
Or doth not hear thee?

TECMESSA.

They have brought him to thee.

[Enter ſervant with EURYSACES.

## SCENE III.

EURYSACES, TECMESSA, AJAX, CHORUS.

AJAX.

Bring him this way: for if he be the ſon
Of Ajax, the freſh blood that hangs about me
Will not affright him; he muſt learn like me
In earlieſt years the ſavage laws of war,
And be inur'd to ſcenes of death and ſlaughter:
May'ſt thou, my boy, be happier than thy father!
In all things elſe it will be no diſgrace
To copy me: I envy thee, my child,
For that thou ſee'ſt not thy own wretchedneſs;
The happineſs of life is not to know.
Thy ignorance will keep thee free from pain,
Till time ſhall teach thee what it is to grieve

And to rejoice; then muſt thou ſhew thy foes
From whom thou art deſcended: may the breath
Of life mean time nouriſh thy tender frame,
That thou may'ſt prove a comfort to thy mother!
I know there's not a Grecian that will dare
Inſult thee, when thy father is no more;
For I ſhall leave thee to the beſt of guardians,
The faithful Teucer, who far from thee now
Sent forth by Greece repels th' invading foe.
Of you, my friends, companions of the war,
The only boon I aſk is, that ye urge
This laſt requeſt to Teucer, ſay, I begg'd
That ſtrait to Telamon and Eribœa,
My aged parents, he wou'd bear my child,
To be the joy of their declining years,
Till death ſhall call them to the ſhades below:
Let not my arms by Greece, or by that plague
Ulyſſes, e'er be made the prize of glory
For rival chiefs: but do thou take, my boy,
[turning to EURYSACES.
The ſev'nfold, vaſt, impenetrable ſhield
Whoſe name thou bear'ſt; the reſt be bury'd with me.
Take

*The reſt be bury'd with me.* The cuſtom of burying the arms of deceaſed warriors in the ſame grave with them is very antient, and is practiſed amongſt the Indians

Take hence the child with ſpeed; nor in the tents
Let there be wailings: Women ever love
To brood o'er ſorrows, and indulge their woe.
Shut to the door. The wound that muſt be cut
No wiſe phyſician will attempt to heal
With incantation, elegy, or ſong.

CHORUS.

I tremble when I hear thee threat'ning thus
With ſharp and piercing voice.

TECMESSA.

Alas! my lord,
What wilt thou do?

AJAX.

Gueſs not; inquire not of me;
Be ſilent, and be wiſe; it will become thee.

TECMESSA.

How am I tortur'd! by the Gods I beg thee,
By our dear child, do not deſtroy us both.

AJAX.

Indians at this day. This whole ſpeech of Ajax, it is obſerved by the commentators, carries with it the air and form of his laſt will and teſtament; he gives orders to his wife and family as a man immediately about to quit the world: this raiſes the paſſion of pity in the ſpectators, and prepares them for the cataſtrophe.

*Incantation, elegy, and ſong.* The Greek word επωδη is here uſed by Sophocles for a charm or incantation, a method of curing diſeaſes frequently made uſe of by the antients.

A J A X.

Thou doſt perplex me; why revere the Gods?
I am not bound to't; for I owe them nothing.

T E C M E S S A.

Be not ſo impious.

A J A X.

Talk to thoſe will hear thee.

T E C M E S S A.

Art thou reſolv'd then?

A J A X.

'Tis too much; thy grief
Grows troubleſome.

T E C M E S S A.

Alas! my lord, I fear——

A J A X [to the CHORUS.

Will ye not take her hence?

T E C M E S S A.

O! by the Gods
I beg thee be perſuaded.

A J A X.

Thou art mad
To think thy words will ever change my purpoſe. [Exeunt.

O D E.

*Change my purpoſe.* Ajax, we muſt here ſuppoſe, breaks from Tecmeſſa and retires: ſhe goes out, and the chorus remains on the ſtage to lament their own unhappy condition, and expreſs their fears for Ajax.

## ODE.

### CHORUS.

### STROPHE.

O happieſt, beſt abode, my native iſle,
Fair Salamis, encompaſs'd by the ſea,
On thee whilſt Gods and men indulgent ſmile,
My country, O behold and pity me!

A long long time on Ida's plain,
Thus doom'd inglorious to remain,
While circling years roll o'er my wretched head:
New terrors ſtill affright me here,
Still is my heart appall'd with fear,
Leſt I ſhou'd viſit ſoon the manſions of the dead.

### ANTISTROPHE.

The woes of Ajax too imbitter mine,
The braveſt leader of the Grecian hoſt,
Untimely viſited by wrath divine,
And in the deſp'rate, cruel phrenzy loſt.

There was a time when ſent by thee
He gain'd the wreath of victory,
Tho' now his weeping friends lament his fall:

Th'

Th' ungrateful chiefs revere no more
The virtues they admir'd before;
His gallant deeds are now forgotten all.

STROPHE II.

Weigh'd down with years, when thou in hoary age,
Unhappy mother, ſhalt theſe tidings hear
Of thy dear Ajax, and his cruel rage,
How wilt thou weep and wail with grief ſincere!

Not like the plaintive nightingale
That warbles ſweet her tender tale,
But with loud ſkrieks of horrible deſpair:
With ſharpeſt anguiſh ſore oppreſs'd,
Then ſhalt thou beat thy aged breaſt,
And in deep ſorrow rend thy wild diſhevell'd hair.

ANTISTROPHE II.

'Tis better far to die than, hopeleſs ſtill
Of cure, to languiſh under ſore diſeaſe;
When mortals ſuffer ſuch diſtinguiſh'd ill
The ſilent tomb is liberty and eaſe.

Ajax, the pride of all our hoſt,
His antient fame and glory loſt,
Sinks down at laſt o'erwhelm'd with foul diſgrace:

How will his hapleſs father bear
His ſon's diſtreſsful fate to hear,
Ev'n ſuch as never fell on Æacus his race!

End of ACT II.

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# ACT III.

## SCENE I.

### AJAX, TECMESSA, CHORUS.

AJAX.

STILL are the ſecret things of man reveal'd,
And what is known, again in darkneſs hid
By endleſs and immeaſurable time;
And nothing is there but in length of days
May come to paſs; ev'n ſacred oaths are broken,
And the fix'd mind perverſe and obſtinate
Subdu'd by time: I, who like harden'd ſteel

Was

*Act* 3. Brumoy, in oppoſition to all the critics, tranſlators and commentators, and without aſſigning any reaſon, extends this act to the end of the next chorus, and begins the third with the arrival of the meſſenger from Teucer; which makes the diviſion of the acts very unequal, the ſecond containing, in the original, upwards of five hundred lines, and the third not above one; but, as I obſerved in the diſſertation, the cuſtom of mincing the antient tragedy into five acts is merely arbitrary, and without any foundation, as it was moſt probably one continued act extending itſelf through the whole Drama.

Was late inflexible, am ſoften'd now
To pity and remorſe by this dear woman;
I cannot bear to leave her here a widow
Amidſt her foes, or to forſake my child,
A helpleſs orphan: No; I will retire
Along the ſhore, and ſeek the running ſtream,
Avert the wrath of angry heav'n, and waſh
My crimes away; there haply ſhall I find
Some unfrequented ſpot where I may hide
This fatal weapon, this deſtructive ſword;
O! I will bury't deep in earth, that none
May ſee it more, but night and Erebus
Preſerve it ſtill from ev'ry mortal eye:
E'er ſince that hapleſs day, when from the hand
Of Hector I receiv'd this dreadful boon,
Nought have I had from Greece but pain and woe:
True is the adage, "from the hands of foes
Gifts are not gifts, but injuries moſt fatal."
Hereafter will I yield me to the Gods
And the Atridæ; ſince they are my maſters,
'Tis meet that I obey them: all that's ſtrong
And mighty muſt ſubmit to pow'rs ſuperior:



*This fatal weapon.* Ajax, who is ſecretly reſolved to deſtroy himſelf, ſays this to prevent the ſuſpicions of his wife and friends from his carrying his ſword out with him: the ſpectators plainly ſee his intent by his induſtry to conceal it.

Doth not the ſnowy winter to the bloom
Of fruitful ſummer yield? and night obſcure,
When by white ſteeds Aurora drawn lights up
The riſing day, ſubmiſſively retire?
The roaring ſea, long vext by angry winds,
Is lull'd by milder zephyrs to repoſe,
And oft the fetters of all-conqu'ring ſleep
Are kindly loos'd to free the captive mind:
From nature then, who thus inſtructs mankind,
Why ſhould not Ajax learn humility?
Long ſince I knew to treat my foe like one
Whom I hereafter as a friend might love
If he deſerved it, and to love my friend
As if he ſtill might one day be my foe:
For little is the truſt we can repoſe
In human friendſhips: but to my intent;
Go thou, Tecmeſſa, and beſeech the Gods
To grant what I requeſt: do you perform
The ſame kind office; and when Teucer comes,
Tell him, the care of me and of my friends
I leave to him: whither I muſt, I muſt:

Obey

*Long ſince I knew, &c.* Tully in his Lælius, ſive de Amicitia, diſclaims this ſelfiſh and worldly maxim as deſtructive of all friendſhip. The ſaying is generally attributed to the celebrated Bias, one of the ſeven ſages of Greece.

Obey my orders: wretched as I am
Soon ſhall ye ſee me freed from all my woes. [Exeunt.

## SCENE II.

### CHORUS.

### STROPHE.

Now let ſounds of mirth and joy
Ev'ry bliſsful hour employ:
Borne on pleaſure's airy wing
Io Pan! to thee we ſing:
Thee, whom on the rocky ſhore
Wreck-ſcap'd mariners adore,
Skill'd the mazy dance to lead,
Teach, O! teach our feet to tread
The round which Cretan Cnoſſus knows,
At Nyſſa which ſpontaneous roſe;
Pan, O! guide this tuneful throng,
While to thee we raiſe the ſong,
From Cyllene's ſnowy brow,
King of pleaſures, hear us now!

*Soon ſhall ye ſee me, &c.* The expreſſion, we may obſerve, is ambiguous, and the ſenſe left doubtful on purpoſe to deceive the chorus, who miſunderſtanding him, immediately on his leaving them break out into a ſong of joy on his recovery. This (beſides, as the commentators have remark'd) gives time for Ajax to retire before the arrival of the meſſenger.

From

From thy mountain O! appear!
Joy and happineſs are here:
And do thou, O! Delian king,
Now thy aid propitious bring!
O! from the Icarian ſea
Come, Apollo, ſmile on me.

ANTISTROPHE.

All our ſorrows now are o'er,
Grief and madneſs are no more:
See, the happy day appears,
Mighty Jove! that ends our fears;
Let us, free from ev'ry care,
Gladly to our ſhips repair:
Ajax now in ſweet repoſe
Sinks, forgetful of his woes;
Humbly to the Gods reſign'd,
He devotes his better mind:
Time, that withers, can reſtore
Human pleaſures: now no more
Muſt we ſay our vows are vain;
Nought unhop'd for ſhou'd remain;
Since beyond our wiſhes ſee
Ajax from his madneſs free;

'Gainſt

'Gainſt th' Atridæ all his rage
See how milder thoughts aſſwage,
Bitter ſtrife and quarrels ceaſe,
All is harmony and peace.

## SCENE III.

MESSENGER, CHORUS.

MESSENGER.

My friends, I bear you news of higheſt import;
From Myſia's rocky mountains hither comes
The noble Teucer; know, ev'n now I ſaw him
Amid the Grecian hoſt, who, as he came,
Surrounded, and on ev'ry ſide pour'd forth
Reproaches on him; not a man but cry'd
Behold the brother of that frantic foe
To Greeee and to her counſels: ſuch their rage
That they had well-nigh ſton'd him; ſwords were drawn,
And dire had been the conflict, but that ſome
Among the aged chiefs by calm advice
Appeas'd the ſtrife: but where is Ajax gone?
That I may tell him: from our maſters nought
Shou'd be conceal'd.

CHORUS.

He is not now within,

But

But juſt ſtept forth, as if on ſome new act
Intent, well-ſuited to his better mind.

MESSENGER.

Alas! too late did Teucer ſend me here,
Or I am come too ſlowly.

CHORUS.

Why regret
His abſence thus?

MESSENGER.

'Twas Teucer's ſtrict command
He ſhou'd be kept within the tent, nor ſtir
Till he arriv'd.

CHORUS.

But, to his ſenſe reſtor'd,
He went to deprecate the wrath divine
And expiate his offence.

MESSENGER.

Thy words are vain,
If Chalcas prophecy aright.

CHORUS.

What then
Did Chalcas ſay? Doſt thou know aught of this?

MESSENGER.

Thus far I know, for I was witneſs of it:

Chalcas

Chalcas, retiring from th' aſſembled chiefs
Apart from the Atridæ, gently preſs'd
The hand of Teucer, and in tend'reſt friendſhip
Beſought him that by ev'ry human art
And means to be devis'd, he wou'd prevent
Ajax his wand'ring forth this fatal day,
If he did ever wiſh to ſee him more:
This day alone, he ſaid, Minerva's wrath
Wou'd laſt againſt him: oft the mighty fall
In deep affliction, ſmit by angry heav'n,
When mortal-born to human laws they yield not
As mortals ought, ſubmiſſively: thus ſpake
The prophet, and long ſince was Ajax deem'd
To have a mind diſturb'd: when firſt he left
His native ſoil, be conqu'ror, O! my child,
His father ſaid, but conquer under God;
Impious and proud his anſwer was; the worſt
Of men, he cry'd, aſſiſted by the Gods
May conquer, I ſhall do the work without them;
Such were his boaſtings: and when Pallas once
With kind aſſiſtance urg'd him to the fight,
Dreadful and horrible was his reply;
Go, queen, to other Grecians lend thy aid,
'Tis needleſs here; for know, where Ajax is

The foe will never come: by words like theſe,
And pride ill-ſuited to a mortal's pow'r,
Did he offend the vengeful deity;
But if he lives, we may preſerve him ſtill,
The Gods aſſiſting; ſo the prophet ſpake;
And Teucer bad me ſay, you all ſhou'd try
To keep him here; but if that cannot be,
And Chalcas judge aright, he is no more.

CHORUS. [to TECMESSA within.]

What ho! Tecmeſſa! moſt unhappy woman!
Come forth and hear the tidings that he brings,
They wound us deep, and all our joys are gone.

## SCENE IV.

TECMESSA, MESSENGER, CHORUS.

TECMESSA.

Scarce do I breathe from ſtill-repeated woes,
And now again thou call'ſt me; wherefore? ſpeak.

CHORUS.

This meſſenger hath brought us dreadful news
Concerning Ajax: hear him.

TECMESSA.

O! what is it?
Am I undone?

MESSENGER.

MESSENGER.

I know not what thou art;
But if thy Ajax be gone forth, my fears
Are great for him.

TECMESSA.

Alas! he is: but, why?
How thou afflict'ſt me!

MESSENGER.

Teucer hath forbad
His wand'ring thus alone.

TECMESSA.

But why forbad him?
And where is Teucer?

MESSENGER.

He will ſoon be here:
He fears this fatal day.

TECMESSA.

Undone Tecmeſſa!
Whence are his fears? Who told him 'twou'd be fatal?

MESSENGER.

Theſtorian Chalcas did foretel, this day
To life or death wou'd fix the fate of Ajax.

TECMESSA. [to the CHORUS.]

Aſſiſt me, friends, in this diſtreſsful hour.

To Teucer haſte, and bring him to my aid;
Some to yon weſtern mountain bend your way,
And ſome to th' eaſt; find out which path he went:
Unhappy wand'rer! O! he has deceiv'd me,
His former love forgotten all and gone!
What muſt we do, my child? I muſt not ſit
Inactive here; no, whereſo'er I can
I'll go to ſearch him: let us haſte, my friends,
Quick, fly this inſtant, if we mean to ſave
The wretched Ajax ruſhing on deſtruction.

CHORUS.

Behold us ready, not in word alone,
But bent with ſpeed to follow thee. Away.

[Exeunt.

End of ACT III.

# ACT IV.

## SCENE I.

AJAX.

THERE ſtands my ſword, and fix'd as it may beſt
Perform its office; 'twas the gift of Hector,
My worſt of foes, whom I deteſted ever:
The ſteel-devouring ſtone hath ſharpen'd well
Its keeneſt edge; bury'd in Trojan earth
It lyes, and now in kindneſs ſeems prepar'd
To end my wretched life; thus far is well:
And now, O! Jove, for firſt to thee 'tis fit
We pay due honours, I addreſs my pray'r;
I aſk not much; I aſk thee but to ſend
Some paſſing ſtranger here to bear the news
Of my unhappy fate to Teucer's ear,
That he may firſt behold, and take me hence,
Leſt by my foes diſcover'd, I be caſt
A prey to dogs and birds; forbid it, Jove!
Thee too, great leader of departed ſouls,
Terreſtrial Hermes, thee I call, O! hear me;
With eaſy ſteps, and ſwift, conduct me ſafe
To my abode, ſoon as this fatal ſword
Shall reach my breaſt; and you, ye virgin pow'rs,

From

From whom whate'er befals of human ill
Cannot be hid, ye goddeſſes rever'd,
Swift to purſue the guilty, O! behold
The wretched Ajax by th' Atridæ fall!
O! ſeize the murth'rers! by my own ſad hand
As I ſhall periſh, let my foes be ſlain
By thoſe whom moſt they love! quick, fly, begone,
Ye vengeful furies, gorge yourſelves in blood,
Nor ſpare a man of all the Grecian hoſt;
And thou, O! ſun, who driv'ſt thy flaming car
Along the vaulted ſky, when thou ſhalt ſee
My native ſoil, O! ſtop thy golden reins;
Tell the ſad ſtory to my hapleſs ſire,
And my afflicted mother; when ſhe hears
The mournful tale, her grief will fill the land
With dreadful lamentations: but 'tis vain
To weep my fate: the buſineſs muſt be done.
O! death, look on me, death; I come to thee:
Soon ſhall we meet, but thee, O! glorious day,
And yon bright charioteer the ſun, no more
Shall I behold, ev'n now thou hear'ſt my laſt
My dying words: O! light, O! ſacred ſoil
Of Salamis, my country, and her gods,
O! noble Athens, O! my lov'd companions,

Ye

Ye rivers, fountains, and fair fields of Troy,
And you my honour'd parents, O! farewell!
'Tis the laſt word Ajax ſhall ſpeak on earth.
The reſt be utter'd to the ſhades below.

[AJAX falls on his ſword and dies.]

## SCENE II.

### CHORUS.

SEMICHORUS I.

Labour on labour! toil on toil! O whither
Have we not wander'd? yet no place informs us
Where Ajax is: but ſoft, I hear a voice.

SEMICHORUS II.

'Twas ours, your friends.

SEMICHORUS I.

What news?

SEMICHORUS II.

We've ſearch'd along
The weſtern ſhore.

SEMICHORUS I.

And is he found?

SEMI-

The Chorus who had been in ſearch of Ajax enter at different parts of the ſtage, having divided themſelves into two parts, the better to diſcover him; they meet as it were by chance, and aſk each other concerning him.

SEMICHORUS II.

Alaſs!

We met with nought but toil; no ſight of him.

SEMICHORUS I.

We from the eaſt return with like ſucceſs;
For none have ſeen or heard of him that way.

SEMICHORUS II.

Who will inform us? who will ſay
Where cruel Ajax bent his way?
Will not the watchful hind, who void of ſleep
Hangs laborious o'er the deep?
From high Olympus will no pitying god,
Will no kind Naiad of the flood,
If chance they ſee the cruel Ajax ſtray,
Tell us where he bent his way?
For O! 'tis dreadful weary'd thus to rove,
Whilſt all our pains ſucceſsleſs prove,
To reach the deſtin'd goal, or find the man we love.

TECMESSA. [from within]

Alaſs! alaſs!

SEMICHORUS I.

Hark! from the neighb'ring grove
I heard a voice.

SEMI-

SEMICHORUS II.

It is the wretched captive,
The wife of Ajax, the poor ſad Tecmeſſa.

SCENE III.

TECMESSA, CHORUS.

TECMESSA.

O! I am loſt, my friends, undone, deſtroy'd!

CHORUS.

Ha! what hath happen'd?

TECMESSA.

Ajax lies before me,
Slain by the ſword which he had bury'd here.

CHORUS.

Fatal ſure was our return,
Thy untimely death to mourn,
Me, and all thy faithful train,
Cruel Ajax, haſt thou ſlain,



*O! I am loſt, &c.* Tecmeſſa, as well as the Chorus, alarm'd by the prophecy of Chalcas as recounted by the meſſenger, had been in ſearch of her huſband, and on her return ſtumbles on his body; the Chorus, we muſt ſuppoſe, are at the forepart of the ſtage, and Tecmeſſa at the back, in the place where Ajax had fall'n upon his ſword. The Chorus here, agreeable to what I before obſerved was cuſtomary in the impaſſion'd parts of the drama, ſing in ſtrophe and antiſtrophe: I have therefore put it into rhime, the better to diſtinguiſh it.

Sad event alas! to me!
Sadder, woman, ſtill to thee.

TECMESSA.

O! I have reaſon now to weep indeed.

CHORUS.

What hand perform'd the horrid deed?

TECMESSA.

His own,
Doubtleſs it was: the ſword he fell upon,
Here, fix'd in earth, declares it muſt be ſo.

[Approaching towards the body.]

CHORUS.

Alone without one pitying friend,
Cam'ſt thou to this dreadful end?
Was I not myſelf to blame,
Who neglectful never came?
Bring him, Tecmeſſa, to my eyes,
Tell me, where thy Ajax lies.

TECMESSA.

He is not to be ſeen: this folded garment
Shall hide the horrid ſight: a ſight no friend
Wou'd wiſh to ſee; whilſt from his noſtrils ſtreams
The black blood, more ſtill iſſuing from the wound
Made by his own deſtructive hand: O! me!

What

What muſt I do? what friend will raiſe him up?
O! where is Teucer? he ſhou'd have been here
To pay his laſt ſad duty to a brother:
O! wretched Ajax! but to think, alas!
What once thou haſt been, and what now thou art,
Thy very foes muſt ſure lament thy fate.

CHORUS.

Ajax, long ſince in thy obdurate mind,
Thy ſad purpoſe was deſign'd;
Long ſince wert thou reſolv'd to ſeek repoſe,
From thy never-ceaſing woes;
This from the daily ſigh, the nightly tear,
This from thy ſorrows did I fear;
This from thy hate which nought cou'd e'er aſſwage;
And 'gainſt th' Atridæ all thy rage:
For never did thy ſoul contentment know,
But ſtill with fierceſt indignation glow,
Since great Achilles' arms were given to thy foe.

TECMESSA.

O! me!

CHORUS.

Alas! I know the wound muſt pierce
Thy inmoſt ſoul.

TECMESSA.

Unhappy loſt Tecmeſſa!

CHORUS.

O! I believe thou art indeed unhappy,
Bereav'd of ſuch a friend.

TECMESSA.

Thou but believ'ſt it,
I am too certain; for I feel it here.

CHORUS.

I know thou doſt.

TECMESSA.

What ſervitude, my child,
Muſt we endure? who will protect us now?

CHORUS.

Doubtleſs thy fears of future pain,
From the Atridæ all are vain,
For never can they mean ſuch ills to thee;
Unfeeling they of human woe,
Nor love nor piety cou'd know;
May heav'n avert the ſad calamity!

TECMESSA.

The gods ordain'd it, and it muſt be ſo.

CHORUS.

But he hath ſuffer'd more than he deſerv'd.

TECMESSA.

Jove's dreadful daughter Pallas ſo decreed
His fate, to gratify her lov'd Ulyſſes.

CHORUS.

Ulyſſes, ever pleas'd to ſee
His madneſs, now will ſmile at thee,
Will laugh at Ajax' woes, nor pity thine:
By him the curs'd Atridæ led,
Perhaps will triumph o'er the dead,
And in the cruel mirth with pleaſure join.

TECMESSA.

Let them rejoice, let them inſult him now
With ſavage joy, but when the dreadful day
Of battle comes, whom living they deſpis'd,
When dead they ſhall lament: fools never know
The treaſure's value, till the treaſure's loſt:
But far more bitter was his death to me
Than ſweet to them: to Ajax 'twas moſt welcome;
Death was his only wiſh, and he obtain'd it:
Then wherefore ſhou'd they triumph? by the hand
Of heav'n, and not by theirs my Ajax fell.
Then let Ulyſſes ſmile: he is not theirs,
He lives not for the Grecians; he is gone,
And has bequeath'd his ſorrows all to me.

SCENE

## SCENE IV.

TEUCER, TECMESSA, CHORUS.

TEUCER.

Alas! alas!

CHORUS.

Hark! 'tis the voice of Teucer
In mournful ſighs lamenting our ſad fate.

TEUCER.

O! Ajax, is it ſo? my deareſt brother,
Dear as theſe eyes to me, hath fame ſaid true,
And art thou gone?

CHORUS.

O! Teucer, he is dead.

TEUCER.

Unhappy fate!

CHORUS.

'Tis ſo indeed.

TEUCER.

Alas!
Wretch that I am.

CHORUS.

O! thou haſt cauſe to weep.

TEUCER

TEUCER.

Dreadful calamity!

CHORUS.

It is indeed

Too much to bear.

TEUCER.

O! wretched, wretched Teucer!

Where is the child? is he at Troy?

CHORUS.

Alone

And in the tent.

TEUCER.

Will ye not bring him to me,

Leſt he ſhou'd fall a victim to the foe?

Ev'n as the hunters ſeize the lion's whelp

Left to its helpleſs dam: quick! fly! aſſiſt me,

For all are glad to triumph o'er the dead.

CHORUS.

To thee, O! Teucer, he bequeath'd the care

Of his lov'd child, and thou obey'ſt him well.

TEUCER.

O Ajax! never did theſe eyes behold

A ſight ſo dreadful; came I then for this

With luckleſs ſpeed? O! melancholy journey!

To ſeek thee long in vain, and thus at laſt
To find thee dead before me, O! my brother!
Quick through the Grecian hoſt, as if ſome god
Had brought the tidings, ſpread the dire report
Of thy untimely fate; far from thee then
I heard and wept, but now, alas! I ſee
And am undone; my beſt, my deareſt Ajax!
Unveil the body; let me view it well,
And count my miſeries; horrid ſpectacle!
O! raſh advent'rous deed! what weight of woe
Thy death has laid on me! alas! to whom
Or whither ſhall I go? O! wherefore, Teucer,
Wert thou not here to ſtop a brother's hand?
What will our poor unhappy father ſay,
The wretched Telamon, will he receive me
With looks of love and pleaſure, when I come
Without his Ajax? O! he never will.
Ev'n in the beſt of times he was not wont
To ſmile, or joy in aught. What then will now
His anger vent? will he not ſpeak of me
As of a faithleſs baſe unworthy ſon,
The ſpurious offspring of a captive mother,
Who hath betray'd and ſlain his beſt-lov'd Ajax
To gain his fair poſſeſſions after death?

Thus

Thus will his wrath, ſharpen'd by peeviſh age,
Upbraid me guiltleſs; and to ſlav'ry doom'd
A wretched exile from his native land
Shall Teucer wander forth: ſuch dreadful ills
Muſt I expect at home: at Troy my foes
Are num'rous, and my friends alas how few!
Thou art the cauſe of all: for O! my Ajax,
What ſhall I do? how can I ſave thee now
From this ſad fate? O! who could have foreſeen
That Hector, long ſince dead, at laſt ſhould prove
The murtherer of Ajax? By the gods
I do beſeech you, mark the fate of both:
The belt, which Ajax did to Hector give,
Dragg'd the brave Trojan o'er the bloody field
Till he expir'd; and now behold the ſword,
Which Hector gave to Ajax, is the cauſe
Of Ajax' death: Erynnis' ſelf did forge
The fatal ſteel, and Pluto made the belt;
Dreadful artificer! But this, and all
That happens to us, is the work of heav'n.
If there be thoſe who doubt it, let them hold
Their diff'ring judgments, I ſhall keep my own.

CHORUS.

Teucer, no more; but rather now prepare
To bury Ajax, and defend thy ſelf

Againſt thy foe, whom yonder I behold
This way advancing, with malignant ſmile,
And looks of ill intent.

TEUCER.

Who can it be?
From th' army, think'ſt thou?

CHORUS.

'Tis the man whoſe cauſe
We came to fight, ev'n Menelaus.

TEUCER.

'Tis ſo.
As he approaches nigh, I know him well.

## SCENE V.

MENELAUS, TEUCER, CHORUS.

MENELAUS.

Stop there; to thee I ſpeak; let go the body,
I will not have it touch'd.

TEUCER.

Why touch it not?

MENELAUS.

Becauſe it is my will, and his who leads
The Grecian hoſt.

TEUCER.

TEUCER.

But wherefore is it ſo?

MENELAUS.

Greece fondly hoped that ſhe had brought a friend,
And firm ally, but by experience found
That Troy herſelf was not ſo much our foe
As Ajax was, who nightly wander'd forth
With deadlieſt rage to murther all our hoſt,
And, but ſome god did fruſtrate his intent,
The fate himſelf hath met had been our own;
Then had he triumph'd; but the gods ordain'd
It ſhou'd not be; and 'gainſt the flocks and herds
Turn'd all his fury: wherefore, know, there lives not
A man of courage or of pow'r ſufficient
To bury Ajax: on the yellow ſhore
He ſhall be caſt; to be the food of birds
That wander there: thou may'ſt reſent it too,
But t'will be vain; at leaſt we will command
When dead, whom living we cou'd ne'er ſubdue,
Nor aſk thy leave: he never wou'd ſubmit,
But now he muſt: yield therefore, or we force thee.
'Tis the Plebeian's duty to obey
The voice of thoſe who bear authority,
And he who doth not is the worſt of men;

For never can the ſtate itſelf ſupport
By wholeſome laws, where there is no ſubmiſſion:
An army's beſt defence is modeſt fear
And rev'rence of its leaders, without theſe
It cannot conquer: it becomes a man
How great ſoe'er his ſtrength, ſtill to remember
A little, very little, may deſtroy him.
He who is guarded by humility
And conſcious ſhame, alone in ſafety lives;
But where licentious freedom and reproach
Injurious reign, each as his will directs
Still acting, know, that city ſoon muſt fall
From all its bliſs, and ſink in deepeſt woe.
Remember then, reſpect is due to me.
Let us not think when pleaſure is enjoy'd
We muſt not ſuffer too, and taſte of pain;
For theſe to mortals ſtill alternate riſe.
There liv'd not one ſo proud and arrogant
As Ajax was: I will be haughty now;
It is my turn: take heed then, touch him not,
Leſt, while thou ſtriv'ſt to bury him, thyſelf
Shou'd drop into the tomb.

CHORUS.

CHORUS.

O! Menelaus,
Do not with maxims grave, and wiſdom's rules
Mix foul reproach and ſlander on the dead.

TEUCER.

It ſhou'd not move our wonder, O! my friends,
To ſee the vulgar err, of meaner ſouls,
And birth obſcure, when men ſo nobly born
Will talk thus baſely: tell me, Menelaus,
For 'twas thy firſt aſſertion, didſt thou bring
Our Ajax here to help the Grecian hoſt,
Or came he hither by himſelf alone
Conducted? whence is thy command o'er him,
Or theſe his followers? who gave thee pow'r,
Who gave thee right? thou may'ſt be Sparta's king,
But art not ours: Ajax was bound by law
No more to thee than thou wert bound to Ajax;
Thyſelf no gen'ral, but to others here
Subjected, therefore lord it where thou may'ſt;
Command thy ſlaves, go, threaten, and chaſtiſe them;
But I will bury Ajax, ſpite of thee,
And of thy Brother, for I heed thee not:
He ſail'd not here to quarrel for the wife
Of Menelaus, like a hireling ſlave,

But to fulfill the ſtrictly-binding oath
Which he had ſworn; he did not come for thee;
For he deſpis'd ſo poor a cauſe; he came
With all his heralds, and a num'rous train,
And brought his captains too; remember therefore
Thy clamours ne'er ſhall turn me from my purpoſe,
Whilſt thou art what thou art.

MENELAUS.

A tongue like thine
But ill becomes thy ſtate: 'tis moſt unſeemly.

TEUCER.

A keen reproach with juſtice on its ſide
Is always grating.

MENELAUS.

This proud archer here
Talks loudly.

TEU-

*Strictly-binding oath, &c.* Tyndarus, the father of the fair Helen, obliged all his daughter's lovers to take an oath, that on which of them ſoever the happy lot ſhould fall to marry her, the reſt ſhould unite in his defence, and, in caſe of any attempt to carry her off, ſhould join their forces to recover her. The event juſtify'd the neceſſity of this oath. Teucer therefore tells Menelaus, that it was not any perſonal regard to him which induced Ajax to join the army, but his reſolution to fulfil this ſolemn engagement.

*This proud archer, &c.* The foot-ſoldiers among the Grecians were divided into the ψιλοι and the ὁπλιται. The ὁπλιται or armed ſoldiers, bore heavy armour, engaging with broad ſhields, and long ſpears: Whereas the ψιλοι or light armed men fought with arrows, and darts, or ſometimes ſtones and ſlings, annoying their enemies at a diſtance, like our modern Indians, but unfit for cloſe fight;

TEUCER.

'Tis no mean illib'ral art.

MENELAUS.

If thou coud'ſt bear a ſhield, how inſolent
And haughty woud'ſt thou be! when naked thus
Thou boaſt'ſt thy valour.

TEUCER.

Naked as I am
I ſhou'd not fly from thee with all thy arms.

MENELAUS.

Thy tongue but ſpeaks thy pride.

TEUCER.

I ſhou'd be proud
When I am juſt.

MENELAUS.

Doth juſtice bid me love
Him who deſtroy'd me?

TEUCER.

Art thou then deſtroy'd?
That's ſtrange indeed, living and dead at once.

MENE-

fight: theſe, to which Teucer belonged, were inferior in honour and dignity to the heavy-armed ſoldiers; Menelaus therefore reproaches him as a man of no rank, alluding probably to the cuſtom among the ψιλοι of ſhooting their arrows, and then retiring behind the ſhields of the heavy-armed for protection. Homer, whom Sophocles never loſes ſight of, deſcribes Teucer acting in this manner. See the 8th book of the Iliad.

MENELAUS.

For him I had been ſo: the gods preſerv'd me.

TEUCER.

Do not diſhonour then the pow'rs divine
That ſav'd thee?

MENELAUS.

Do I violate their laws?

TEUCER.

If thou forbid'ſt the burial of the dead
Thou doſt offend the gods.

MENELAUS.

He was my foe,
And therefore I forbid it.

TEUCER.

Art thou ſure
That Ajax ever was thy foe?

MENELAUS.

I am:
Our hate was mutual, and thou know'ſt the cauſe.

TEUCER.

Becauſe thou wert corrupted, thy falſe voice
Condemn'd him.

MENE-

*Thy falſe voice, &c.* The Scholiaſts on this place inform us that in the famous conteſt between Ajax and Ulyſſes for the arms of Achilles, the former loſt them by the caſting vote of Menelaus.

MENELAUS.

'Twas the judges' fault, not mine.

TEUCER.

Thus may'ſt thou ſcreen a thouſand injuries.

MENELAUS.

Some one may ſuffer for this inſolence.

TEUCER.

Not more perhaps than others.

MENELAUS.

This alone
Remember, bury'd he ſhall never be.

TEUCER.

Do thou remember too, I ſay, he ſhall.

MENELAUS.

So have I ſeen a bold imperious man
With froward tongue, before the ſtorm began,
Urging the tardy mariner to ſail,
But when the tempeſt roſe, no more was heard
The coward's voice, but wrap'd beneath his cloak
Silent he laid, and ſuffer'd ev'ry foot
To trample on him; thus it is with thee,
And thy foul tongue: forth from a little cloud
Soon as the ſtorm ſhall burſt, it will o'erwhelm thee,
And ſtop thy clamours.

TEUCER.

I too have beheld
A man with folly ſwol'n reproach his friends
Oppreſs'd with ſore calamity, when ſtrait
One came like me, with indignation fir'd,
Saw, and addreſs'd him thus, "ceaſe, ſhameleſs wretch,
"Nor thus oppreſs the dead; for, if thou doſt,
"Remember thou ſhalt ſuffer for thy crime:"
Thus ſpake he to the weak inſulting fool;
Methinks I ſee him here; it muſt be he,
Ev'n Menelaus; have I gueſs'd aright?

MENELAUS.

'Tis well; I'll leave thee: 'tis a folly thus
To talk with thoſe whom we have pow'r to puniſh.

[Exit.

## SCENE VI.

TEUCER, CHORUS.

TEUCER.

Away, this babbler is not to be borne.

CHORUS.

*Weak inſulting fool, &c.* There is ſomething in the raillery of this ſcene which will probably appear very rough, when compared with the refinement of modern manners: The heroes of Sophocles, like thoſe of Homer, are not remarkable for their delicacy. "Il faut convenir (ſays Brumoy) que les heros "Grecs ſe traitent un peu à la Grecque, c'eſt à-dire, aſſez incivilement; mais "telle étoit la maniere d'une nation d'ailleurs ſi polie; cela n'eſt pas pour nous "plaire aujourd'hui."

CHORUS.

The conteſt will grow warm: O! Teucer, haſte,
Prepare ſome hollow foſs for the remains
Of Ajax, raiſe him there a monument,
By after ages ne'er to be forgotten.

TEUCER.

And, lo! in happy hour this way advancing
The wife and ſon of our unhappy friend,
To pay due honours, and adorn his tomb:

## SCENE VII.

TECMESSA, EURYSACES, TEUCER, CHORUS.

TEUCER.

Come hither, boy, bend down and touch thy father;
There ſit, and holding in thy hands this hair
And hers and thine, the ſuppliant's humble treaſure,
Offer thy pious prayers for thy dead father:
If from yon hoſtile camp the foe ſhou'd come
To drive thee hence, far from his native land,



*Holding in thy hands &c.* It was cuſtomary among the Grecians on the death of friends or relations to tear and cut off their hair to throw it on the dead body, or ſometimes into the funeral pile, with a deſign to render the ghoſt of the deceaſed perſon propitious, as well as to ſhew their grief for the loſs of him: we find Electra performing this ceremony in honour of Oreſtes whom ſhe ſuppoſed dead.

Whoe'er he be, unbury'd may he lye,
From his whole race uprooted, torn away,
Ev'n as this hair which here I cut before thee;
O! guard it well, my child, and you my friends,
Behave like men, aſſiſt, protect him now;
Till I return, and, ſpite of all our foes,
Perform the rites, and raiſe a tomb to Ajax.

## SCENE VIII.

TECMESSA, EURYSACES, CHORUS.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

When will the happy hour appear,
That comes to calm our ev'ry fear,
From endleſs toil to bring us ſweet repoſe,
To bid our weary wandrings ceaſe,
To fold us in the arms of peace,
And put the wiſh'd-for period to our woes?
For ſince the day when firſt to Troy we came,
Nought have we known but grief, reproach, and ſhame.

ANTI-

*Scene* VIII. Menelaus goes out with an intention, we muſt ſuppoſe, to bring back with him a proper force to ſecure the execution of his orders which Teucer had treated with contempt; Teucer retires to find out a proper place for the interment of Ajax, and leaves Tecmeſſa and Euryſaces weeping over the body: the Chorus ſings a pathetic dirge, lamenting the miſeries of war, and their own unhappy condition.

ANTISROPHE I.

O! that the man, who erſt inſpir'd
With horrid rage, our Grecians fir'd
To ſlaught'rous deeds, and taught them firſt to fight,
E'er he had learn'd the dreadful trade,
Himſelf had mingled with the dead,
Or ſcatter'd wide in air, or ſunk in endleſs night!
For O! from war unnumber'd evils flow,
The inexhauſted ſource of ev'ry human woe.

STROPHE II.

By war diſturb'd the genial board
No longer will its ſweets afford;
Their fragrant odours round my head
The verdant wreaths no longer ſpread;
Nor muſic's charms my ſoul delight,
Nor love with rapture crown the night;
No love alas! for me, but grief and care;
For when I think of Troy I ſtill deſpair,
And wet with many a tear my wild diſhevell'd hair.

ANTISROPHE II.

Nor nightly fear nor hoſtile dart
Whilſt Ajax liv'd, appall'd my heart,
But all our pleaſures now are o'er,
The valiant Ajax is no more:

O!

O cou'd I climb the woody ſteep
That hangs incumbent o'er the deep,
From Sunium's cliff by waves for ever beat!
Thence ſhou'd my eye the lovely proſpect greet,
And ſmile on ſacred Athens riſing at my feet.

End of ACT IV.

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## ACT V.

# ACT V.

## SCENE I.

TEUCER, AGAMEMNON, CHORUS.

TEUCER.

THIS way I bent my haſty ſteps to meet
The Grecian chief, who hither comes prepar'd
To vent his keen reproaches.

AGAMEMNON.

I am told
That thou, ev'n thou, the ſon of a vile ſlave,
Haſt dar'd to utter fouleſt calumny
Againſt thy prince, and paſs'd unpuniſh'd for it;
Mean as thy birth is, what had been thy pride
And high demeanor, had thy mother ſprung
From noble blood? barbarian as thou art,
How coud'ſt thou praiſe a wretch who like thyſelf
Was nothing? we, it ſeems, for thou haſt ſworn it,
Are not the maſters or of Greece or thee;

Ajax alone, thou ſay'ſt, was leader here.
Shall we be thus inſulted by our ſlaves?
Who is this boaſter? and what mighty deed
Hath he perform'd which I cou'd not have done?
Is there no Hero in the Grecian hoſt
But Ajax? Vain indeed were our reſolves
In the warm conteſt for Achilles' arms,
If Teucer yet ſhall queſtion the decree,
Againſt the gen'ral voice; reſiſting ſtill,
And ſtill reproachful, with deluſive arts
Tho' conquer'd, yet oppoſing: wholeſome laws
Will nought avail, if thoſe whom juſtice deems
Superior, to the vanquiſh'd muſt reſign,
And firſt in virtue be the laſt in fame;
It muſt not be; not always the huge ſize
Of weighty limbs enſures the victory;
They who excel in wiſdom are alone
Invincible: thou ſeeſt the brawny ox
How the ſmall whip will drive him thro' the field;
What if the med'cine be apply'd to thee
For thy proud boaſting, and licentious tongue!
T'will be thy portion ſoon, unleſs thou learn'ſt
More wiſdom; henceforth, mindful what thou art,
Bring with thee one of nobler blood to plead

Thy

Thy cauſe; for know, the language which thou talk'ſt
Is barb'rous, and I underſtand thee not.

CHORUS.

I can but wiſh that wiſdom may attend
To guide you both.

TEUCER.

Alas! how very ſoon
Are all the merits of the dead forgotten!
O! Ajax, is the memory of thee
Already loſt, ev'n by the man for whom
Thy life ſo oft was ventur'd in the field!
But now 'tis paſt, and buried in oblivion:
Thou wordy ſland'rer! can'ſt thou not remember
When baffled and unequal to the foe
Cloſe pent within the walls our forces lay,
Can'ſt thou not call to mind who came alone
To your deliv'rance, when devouring flames
Tow'r'd o'er our ſhips, when Hector leap'd the foſs
And ruſh'd amongſt us, then who fought for Greece?
Who drove him back but Ajax, who, thou ſay'ſt,
Cou'd never fight? did he not fight for you?
He met the noble Hector hand to hand,
Unbidden dared the fortune of the field;
He ſcorn'd the coward's art to fix his lot

In the moiſt earth; forth from the creſted helmet
It ſprang the firſt: ſuch were the deeds of Ajax,
And I was witneſs of them; I, the ſlave,
For ſo thou call'ſt me, ſprung from a barbarian:
How dares a wretch like thee to talk of birth!
Who was thy grandſire? can'ſt thou not remember
That old barbarian, Phrygian Pelops, tell me
Who was thy father, Atreus, was he not?
That worſt of men, who at a brother's table
Serv'd up his children, horrible repaſt!
Thy mother too a Cretan, and a ſlave;
A vile adultreſs, whom thy father caught
And head-long caſt into the ſea: ſhalt thou
Talk then to me of birth, to me, the ſon
Of valiant Telamon, renown'd in war,
And wedded to a queen, the royal race
Of great Laomedon, and faireſt gift
Of fam'd Alcides? thus of noble blood
From either parent ſprung, ſhall I diſgrace
The man whom thou inhuman wou'dſt ſtill keep
Unbury'd here? doſt thou not bluſh to think on't?
But, mark me well; if thou doſt caſt him forth,
Not he alone inglorious on the plain
Shall lye, together we will periſh all:

To

To dye with glory in a brother's cauſe
Is better far than fighting for the wife
Of Agamemnon, or of Menelaus:
For thy own ſake, and not for mine, remember
If thou provoke me, thou'lt be ſorry for it,
And wiſh'd thou'dſt rather fear'd than anger'd Teucer.

## SCENE II.

ULYSSES, AGAMEMNON, MENELAUS, TEUCER, CHORUS.

CHORUS.

Ulyſſes, if thou mean'ſt not to inflame,
But to compoſe this dreadful ſtrife, thou com'ſt
In happieſt hour.

ULYSSES.

Far off I heard the voice
Of the Atridæ o'er this wretched corſe;
Whence roſe the clamour, friends?

MENELAUS.

With bitt'reſt words
This Teucer here, Ulyſſes, has revil'd me.

ULYSSES.

What words? for if he heard the ſame from thee,
I blame him not.

AGAMEMNON.

He did provoke me to it.

ULYSSES.

What injʼry hath he done thee?

AGAMEMNON.

He declares
The body ſhall have ſepulture, himſelf
Perforce will bury Ajax, ſpite of me,
And of my powʼr.

ULYSSES.

Shall I be free, and ſpeak
The truth to thee without reproach or blame?

AGAMEMNON.

Thou mayſt; for well thou knowʼſt I hold Ulyſſes
Of all the Greeks my beſt and deareſt friend.

ULYSSES.

Then hear me, by the gods I muſt intreat thee;
Do not, remorſeleſs and inhuman, caſt
The body forth unburyʼd, nor permit
Authority to trample thus on juſtice.
Eʼer ſince our conteſt for Achilles' arms,
Hath Ajax been my foe, and yet I ſcorn
To uſe him baſely; evʼn Ulyſſes owns
Of all the Grecian chiefs who came to Troy

(Except

(Except Achilles) Ajax was the braveſt.
Do not deny him then the honours due
To worth ſo great; for know, it were a crime
Not againſt him alone but 'gainſt the gods,
A violation of the laws divine.
To hurt the brave and virtuous after death,
Ev'n tho' he liv'd thy foe, is infamous.

AGAMEMNON.

Plead'ſt thou for Ajax?

ULYSSES.

Yes; I was his foe
Whilſt juſtice wou'd permit me; but he's dead;
Therefore thou ſhoud'ſt not triumph, nor rejoice
With mirth unſeemly o'er a vanquiſh'd man.

AGAMEMNON.

'Tis not ſo eaſy for a king to act
By honour's ſtricteſt rules.

ULYSSES.

'Tis always ſo,
To hearken to the counſels of a friend,
When he adviſes well.

AGAMEMNON.

But know, the good
And virtuous ſtill ſubmit to thoſe who rule.

ULYSSES.

ULYSSES.

No more: when thou art vanquiſh'd by thy friends,
Thou art thyſelf the conqu'ror.

AGAMEMNON.

Still remember
For whom thou plead'ſt, Ulyſſes.

ULYSSES.

For a foe,
But for a brave one.

AGAMEMNON.

Doſt thou thus revere
Ev'n after death thy enemy?

ULYSSES.

I do:
Virtue is dearer to me than revenge.

AGAMEMNON.

Such men are moſt unſtable in their ways.

ULYSSES.

Our deareſt friend may one day be our foe.

AGAMEMNON.

Doſt thou deſire ſuch friends?

ULYSSES.

I cannot love
Or praiſe th' unfeeling heart.

AGAMEMNON.

This day ſhall Greece
Mark us for cowards.

ULYSSES.

Greece will call us juſt.

AGAMEMNON.

Woud'ſt thou perſuade me then to grant him burial?

ULYSSES.

I wou'd, and for that purpoſe came I hither.

AGAMEMNON.

How ev'ry man conſults his own advantage,
And acts but for himſelf!

ULYSSES.

And who is he
Whom I ſhou'd wiſh to ſerve before Ulyſſes?

AGAMEMNON.

'Tis thy own work, remember, and not mine.

ULYSSES.

The deed will win thee praiſe, and ev'ry tongue
Shall call thee good.

AGAMEMNON.

Thou know'ſt I'd not refuſe
Ulyſſes more, much more than this; but Ajax
Or bury'd or unbury'd is the ſame,

And muſt be hateful ſtill to Agamemnon;
But do as it beſeems thee beſt.

CHORUS.

Ulyſſes,
The man who ſays thou art not wiſe and good
Is ſenſeleſs and unjuſt.

ULYSSES.

I tell thee, Teucer,
Henceforth I am as much the friend of Ajax
As once I was his foe: ev'n now I mean
To join with thee, a fellow-labourer
In all the pious offices of love,
Nor wou'd omit, what ev'ry man ſhou'd pay
The honours due to ſuch exalted virtue!

TEUCER.

O! beſt of men, thou haſt my thanks and praiſe,
And well deſerv'ſt them, for thou haſt tranſcended
My utmoſt hopes. I little thought the worſt
Of all his foes among the Grecian hoſt
Wou'd thus alone defend, alone protect
The dead from inſult, when theſe thund'ring leaders
United came, to caſt his body forth
With infamy; but may the god who rules
O'er high Olympus, and the vengeful furies,

Daugh-

Daughters of Jove, the guilt-rewarding ſiſters,
With all-deciding juſtice ſoon repay
The haughty tyrants: for thy offer'd aid,
Son of Laertes, in the fun'ral rites,
Perhaps it might offend the honour'd ſhade
Of our dead friend, it cannot be accepted;
For all beſide we thank thee: if thou will'ſt
To ſend aſſiſtance from the Grecian camp,
'Twill be receiv'd; the reſt ſhall be my care.
Thou haſt perform'd the duty of a friend,
And we acknowledge it.

ULYSSES.

I wou'd have lent
My willing aid, but ſince it muſt not be,
I ſhall ſubmit; farewel. [Exit Ulyſſes.

SCENE III.

AGAMEMNON, MENELAUS, TEUCER, EURYSACES, CHORUS.

TEUCER.

Thus far is right;
The time already paſt doth chide our ſloth:
My friends, be vigilant; let ſome prepare
The hollow foſs, ſome o'er the ſacred flame
Place the rich tripod for the fun'ral bath;

Forth from the camp a choſen band muſt bear
His glitt'ring arms, and trophies of the war.
Do thou, my child, if thou haſt ſtrength, upliſt
[to Euryſaces.
Thy father's body; ſee, the veins, yet warm,
Spout forth with blood; haſte, help, aſſiſt me, all
Who bear the name of friends, and pay with me
Your laſt ſad duties to the noble Ajax;
For never was on earth a better man.

CHORUS.

Whate'er of good or ill weak mortals know,
Muſt from their beſt of guides, experience, flow;
Seek then no farther; for to man is giv'n
The preſent ſtate, the future left to heav'n.

*Whate'er of good or ill &c.* The ſentiment in the original is, if I am not miſtaken, exactly agreeable to my interpretation, though the Greek carries with it ſome degree of obſcurity; it ſeems deſign'd by Sophocles as a kind of moral to the drama; I have therefore taken the liberty more fully to expreſs, and explain it in the tranſlation. For a complete defence and illuſtration of this play in all its parts, I refer my readers to Hedelin's critique on Ajax, ſubjoin'd to his pratique du theatre, or, whole art of the ſtage.

FINIS.

# ELECTRA.

# Dramatis Perſonæ.

ELECTRA, daughter of AGAMEMNON and CLYTÆMNESTRA.

ORESTES, brother of ELECTRA.

PYLADES, friend of ORESTES.

GOVERNOR of ORESTES.

CLYTÆMNESTRA, wife to ÆGISTHUS.

CHRYSOTHEMIS, ſiſter of ELECTRA.

ÆGISTHUS, king of Argos and Mycenæ.

CHORUS,

Compoſed of the principal LADIES of MYCENÆ.

SCENE, MYCENÆ, before the palace of ÆGISTHUS.

# ELECTRA.

## ACT I.

### SCENE I.

ORESTES, PYLADES,
GOVERNOR of ORESTES.

GOVERNOR.

O Son of great Atrides, he who led
Embattled Greece to Troy's devoted walls,
At length behold what thy deſiring eyes
So long have ſought, behold thy native ſoil,
Thy much-lov'd Argos, and the hallow'd grove

O Of

The ſcene lies juſt before the gates of the palace of Ægiſthus; on the back part of it is repreſented a view of the two cities of Argos and Mycenæ, the temple of Juno, and the grove of Io, which muſt altogether have made a noble and magnificent appearance, as the Greeks ſpared no expence in the decorations of their theatre. The place of action, the perſons, with the whole view and ſubject of the piece, are pointed out to us, in the firſt ſcene, with that accuracy, plainneſs and ſimplicity, for which Sophocles is ſo eminently diſtinguiſh'd.

*The hallow'd grove of Io.* Io, the daughter of Inachus, who was transform'd into a heifer by Jupiter to conceal her from the rage of Juno, who diſcover'd and placed her under the guardianſhip of Argus. She afterwards ſent a gad-fly to ſting her into madneſs. The ſtory is told in the firſt book of Ovid's Metamorph.

Of Io, frantic maid: on this ſide lies
The Lycian forum, on the left the fane
Of Juno far renown'd: behold! we come
To rich Mycenæ, and the ſlaught'rous houſe
Of Pelops' hapleſs race, from whoſe ſad walls
Long ſince I bore thee, at thy ſiſters hand
Gladly receiv'd, and with paternal care
To this bleſt day have foſter'd up thy youth,
Till riper years ſhou'd give thee to return,
And pay with dire revenge thy father's murther.
Now, my Oreſtes, and thou dear companion
Of all our ſuff'rings, much-lov'd Pylades,
Let deepeſt counſel ſway our juſt reſolves;
For lo! reſplendent Phœbus with his light
Calls up the chearful birds to early ſong,

And

*The Lycian forum.* A place ſacred to Apollo λυκιος or λυκοκτονος the wolf-ſlayer, ſo call'd from his killing wolves when under the diſguiſe of a ſhepherd to Admetus.

*The fane of Juno.* Between Argos and Mycenæ, which are often miſtaken by the tragic poets for the ſame city, was placed the magnificent temple of Juno. Before the time of Agamemnon they had each a diſtinct ſovereign: he firſt united and ruled over them both.

*The ſlaught'rous houſe of Pelops.* A family which furniſh'd ample matter for the tragic poets. The ſtories, here alluded to, of Tantalus, Pelops, Thyeſtes, Agamemnon, &c. are too well known to need any illuſtration.

And gloomy night hath loſt her ſtarry train:
Come then, my friends, and e'er th' awaken'd city
Pours forth her buſy throngs, this inſtant here
Let us conſult; believe me, 'tis no time
For dull delay; tis the deciſive hour,
And this the very criſis of our fate.

ORESTES.

What proofs thou giv'ſt me of the nobleſt nature
And true benevolence, thou good old man!
Of ſervants ſure the faithfuleſt and beſt
That ever bore the name: the gen'rous ſteed,
Tho' worn with years, thus keeps his wonted courage
And warns his maſter of approaching danger;
Like him thou ſtirr'ſt me up to noble deeds,
And follow'ſt me undaunted: but attend
To what I have reſolv'd, and if I err,
Let thy ſuperior judgment ſet me right.
When to the delphic oracle I flew,
Eager to know how on my father's foes
I beſt might ſatiate my revenge, the god
Enjoin'd me not by force or open arms
To ruſh upon them, but with guileful arts
And ſilent well conducted fraud betray them.
Such was his will; thou therefore, ſoon as time

Shall lend thee opportunity, unknown
And unſuſpected (as thy abſence hence
For ſo long ſpace and hoary age ſhall make thee)
Muſt ſteal upon them, learn their ſecret counſels,
As ſoon thou may'ſt, and quick inform us of them;
Say thou'rt of Phocis, from Phanoteus ſent
By one who is their friend and firm ally;
Say, and confirm it with a ſolemn oath
Oreſtes is no more, by a rude ſhock
Thrown from his chariot at the Pythian games;
Be this thy tale; mean time (for thus the god
His will divine expreſs'd) my father's tomb
With due libations and devoted hair
Ourſelves will crown; and thence returning bring,
From the dark covert where thou know'ſt 'twas hid,
The brazen urn; there, we ſhall tell the tyrant,

Thrice

*From Phanoteus ſent, &c.* Phanoteus was a ſmall midland town of Phocis, a city of Greece, famous for the Oracle of Delphos: according to Strabo it was formerly call'd Panope.

*At the Pythian games, &c.* The games here mention'd, and which are deſcribed in the ſecond act, were not inſtituted till five hundred years after the death of Oreſtes; Sophocles therefore is found guilty by the critics of a flagrant anachroniſm in this place. Mr. Brumoy however endeavours to defend him by obſerving that though the lateſt Æra of their firſt celebration is dated at the 48th Olympiad, Apollo might nevertheleſs, immediately after the deſtruction of the Pytho, have himſelf inſtituted; ſomething like the grand ſolemnity, which was many years afterwards heightened and improved by the public exhibition of theſe games under the influence of the civil power.

Thrice welcome news! Oreſtes' aſhes lie.
What ſhou'd deter me from the pious fraud?
Since my feign'd death but gains me real fame,
And I ſhall wake to better life: the deed,
Which brings ſucceſs and honour, muſt be good.
Oft times the wiſeſt and the beſt of men
From death like this have roſe with added greatneſs;
Ev'n ſo thy friend to his deluded foes
Shall ſoon return unlook'd for, and before them
Shine like a ſtar with more diſtinguiſh'd luſtre.
O! my lov'd country, and its guardian gods,
Receive Oreſtes, and with happy omen
Propitious ſmile, and thou, paternal ſeat,
For lo! by heav'ns command I come to purge thee
Of vile uſurpers, and avenge thy wrongs;
Drive me not from thee an abandon'd exile
With infamy, but grant me to poſſeſs
My father's throne, and fix his injur'd race.
Thus far 'tis well: my faithful miniſter,

Thou

*The pious fraud &c.* The Greeks, who were remarkably ſuperſtitious, entertain'd a notion that to feign themſelves dead had ſomething in it both wicked and dangerous; they were apprehenſive that death would not be thus mock'd, but would revenge the fraud by coming upon them in reality. Oreſtes endeavours to ſhake off theſe fears, and to vindicate himſelf by the example of others who had done the ſame, and paſs'd unpuniſh'd.

Thou to thy office, we to ours with ſpeed;
So time and opportunity require,
On whom the fate of mortals muſt depend.

ELECTRA. [from within.]

O miſery!

GOVERNOR.

Methought a mournful voice
Spake from within.

ORESTES.

Perhaps the poor Electra,
Shall we not ſtay and hearken to it?

GOVERNOR.

No:
Firſt be Apollo's great beheſts obey'd
Before thy father's tomb; that pious deed
Perform'd ſhall fire our ſouls with nobler warmth
And crown our bold attempt with fair ſucceſs.

[Exeunt.

SCENE

*Firſt be Apollo's, &c.* The meeting of Electra and Oreſtes in this place would apparently have ſpoil'd the whole oeconomy of the drama; it is therefore artfully defer'd by the poet, at the ſame time that the reaſon alledged by the old man gives us the moſt favourable idea of the piety of the antients. A brother has an opportunity of ſeeing and converſing with a ſiſter whom he loved, and from whom he had been ſeparated twenty years, but he forgoes it, in order previouſly to perform a religious duty. Chriſtians may read and profit by the example.

## SCENE II.

### ELECTRA.

O! ſacred light, and O! thou ambient air!
Oft have ye heard Electra's loud laments,
Her ſighs, and groans, and witneſs'd to her woes,
Which ever as each hateful morn appear'd
I pour'd before you; what at eve retir'd
I felt of anguiſh my ſad couch alone
Can tell, which water'd nightly with my tears
Receiv'd me ſorrowing; that beſt can tell
What pangs I ſuffer'd for a hapleſs father,
Whom not the god of war with ruthleſs hand
Struck nobly fighting in a diſtant ſoil,
But my fell mother, and the curs'd Ægiſthus,
The part'ner of her bed, remorſeleſs ſlew;
Untimely didſt thou fall, lamented ſhade,
And none but poor Electra mourns thy fate;
Nor ſhall ſhe ceaſe to mourn thee, while theſe eyes
View the fair heavens, or behold the ſun;
Never, O! never! like the nightingale

Whoſe

*Like the nightingale, &c.* Philomela the daughter of Pandion, and ſiſter of Procne the wife of Tereus. The poet, both in this and the following ſcene, takes the nightingale for Procne, as it was Procne and not Philomela who ſerved up her ſon Itys to Tereus in revenge for the injury done to her ſiſter. Eſchylus, Euripides, and Ariſtophanes alſo ſuppoſe Procne to have been changed into a nightingale.

Whoſe plaintive ſong bewails her raviſh'd brood;
Here will I ſtill lament my father's wrongs,
And teach the echo to repeat my moan.
O! ye infernal deities, and thou
Terreſtrial Hermes, and thou, Nemeſis,
Replete with curſes, and ye vengeful furies,
Offspring of Gods, the miniſters of wrath
To vile adult'rers, who with pity view
The ſlaughter'd innocent, behold this deed!
O! come, aſſiſt, revenge my father's murther;
Quickly, O! quickly bring me my Oreſtes;
For lo I ſink beneath oppreſſive woe,
And can no longer bear the weight alone.

## SCENE III.

### CHORUS, ELECTRA.

CHORUS.

O! wretched daughter of an impious mother!
Wilt thou for ever mourn, for ever thus
With unavailing tears, and endleſs ſorrow
Lament the royal Agamemnon's fate,
By a vile woman's wicked arts betray'd?
Periſh the hand (forgive the pious curſe,
Ye heav'nly pow'rs!) that gave the deadly blow!

ELECTRA.

My noble friends, and partners in affliction,
Who thus, to ſooth my ſorrows, kindly try
Each art which love and friendſhip can inſpire;
Ye come to comfort me, I know ye do,
I know my tears are fruitleſs all and vain;
But O! permit me to indulge my griefs,
For I muſt weep.

CHORUS.

Thy tears can ne'er recall him
From the dark manſions of the common grave,
No, nor thy pray'rs; they can but make thee wretched,
And ſink thee deeper in calamity;
Why art thou then ſo fond of miſery?

ELECTRA.

Devoid of ſenſe and feeling is the heart
That can forget an injur'd parent's wrongs.
I love the airy meſſenger of Jove,
The mournful bird that weeps her Itys' fate,
And ev'ry night repeats the tender tale;
Thee too I rev'rence as a goddeſs, thee,



*Meſſenger of Jove.* Procne, called the meſſenger of Jove, from her uſhering in the ſpring. See the note on Philomela.

Unhappy Niobe! for ſtill thou weep'ſt,
And from the marble tears eternal flow.

CHORUS.

But O! reflect, that not to thee alone
Misfortune comes, that comes to all: behold
Iphianaſſa, and Chryſothemis,
And him who hides his grief, illuſtrious youth,
Thy lov'd Oreſtes, theſe have ſuffer'd too.

ELECTRA.

Oreſtes! yes, Mycenæ ſhall receive
In happy hour her great avenger; Jove
With ſmiles auſpicious ſhall conduct him to me;
For him alone I wait, for him, a wretch
Deſpis'd, of children and of nuptial rites.
Hopeleſs I wander; he remembers not
What I have done for him, what ſuffer'd, ſtill

With

*Unhappy Niobe.* Niobe, the daughter of Tantalus, and queen of Thebes; feign'd by the poets to be turn'd into ſtone, after the death of her children. See Ovid's Met. Book VI.

*Iphianaſſa and Chryſothemis.* Homer (Il. Book IX.) mentions three daughters of Agamemnon, Chryſothemis, Laodice, and Iphianaſſa. Euripides takes no notice of any but Iphigenia, (who was ſacrificed) and Electra. Poſſibly the Laodice of Homer is the Electra of Sophocles. The poets took the liberty of changing circumſtances of this nature, not eſſential to the ſubject, as they thought proper.

With airy promiſes he mocks my hopes,
And yet he comes not to me.

CHORUS.

But he will.

Deſpair not, daughter; Jove is yet in heav'n,
The god who ſees, and knows, and governs all:
Patient to him ſubmit, nor let thy rage
Too far tranſport thee, nor oblivion drown
The juſt remembrance of thy matchleſs woes;
Time is a kind indulgent deity,
And he ſhall give thee ſuccour, he ſhall ſend
The god of Acheron, from Chryſa's ſhores
To bring Oreſtes, and avenge thy wrongs.

ELECTRA.

O! but the while how much of life is gone!
And I a hopeleſs wretched orphan ſtill,
Without a friend to guard, or to protect me;
Diſgrac'd, diſhonour'd, like a ſtranger clad
In baſe attire, and fed with homelieſt fare.

CHORUS.

Sad news indeed the hapleſs meſſenger
To Argos brought, that ſpoke the wiſh'd return



*From Chryſa's ſhores.* Chryſa, or Chryſſa was a town of Phocis by the river ſide, of which Strophius, the father of Pylades, was king; this is the place where Oreſtes was privately educated, and accounts for the ſo much celebrated friendſhip of the two princes.

Of thy lov'd father to his native ſoil;
Fatal the night when Agamemnon fell
Or by a mortal or immortal hand;
The work of fraud and luſt, a horrid deed!
Whoe'er perform'd it.

ELECTRA.

O! deteſted feaſt!
O! day, the bitt'reſt ſure that ever roſe!
With him I periſh'd then; but may the gods
Repay the murth'rers; never may they hear
The voice of joy, or taſte of comfort more.

CHORUS.

Ceaſe thy complaints, already haſt thou ſuffer'd
For thy loud diſcontents, and threat'ned vengeance.
'Tis folly to contend with pow'r ſuperior.

ELECTRA.

*The work of fraud and luſt.* Ægiſthus and Clytæmneſtra are ſaid to have watch'd Agamemnon as he came out of the bath, when they threw over his head a ſhirt without any opening at the neck, entangled in this they murther'd him; thus was the ſcheme laid by fraud and treachery and executed by luſt.

*Whoe'er perform'd it.* The Chorus ſeems fearful of attributing that crime to Clytæmneſtra and Ægiſthus, which they knew them guilty of, and to doubt whether they were at liberty to imprecate the divine vengeance on them for it. Dacier attributes this to the author's own idea of government, as requiring the implicit ſubmiſſion of ſubjects to their king, whether he was their lawful ſovereign or an uſurper. Perhaps a better reaſon for this diffidence may be aſſign'd from the natural modeſty of the ſex, and the impiety of curſing thoſe who had at leaſt done no injury to them.

ELECTRA.

Folly indeed, and madneſs! but my griefs
Will force their way, and whilſt Electra breathes
She muſt lament; for who will bring me comfort,
Or ſooth my ſorrows? let me, let me go,
And weep for ever.

CHORUS.

'Tis my love intreats;
Truſt me, I feel a mother's fondneſs for thee,
And fain wou'd ſave thee from redoubled woes.

ELECTRA.

And wou'ſt thou have me then neglect the dead?
Forget my father? can there be ſuch guilt?
When I do ſo may infamy purſue me!
And if I wed, may all the joys of love
Be far remov'd! if vengeance doth not fall
On crimes like theſe, for ever farewell juſtice,
Shame, honour, truth and piety, farewell!

CHORUS.

*I feel a mother's fondneſs, &c.* The Chorus is compoſed of the principal ladies of Mycenæ; the air of authority with which they addreſs Electra, their calling her daughter, with other circumſtances, make it moſt probable that, as Dacier has remark'd, they were not virgins, but matrons of rank and quality in the city.

CHORUS.

Pardon me, daughter; if my warmth offend,
Glad I ſubmit; we'll follow, and obey thee.

ELECTRA.

I am myſelf to blame, and bluſh to think
How much unfit I ſeem to bear the weight
Impos'd upon me; but indeed 'tis great:
Forgive me, friends, a woman born as I am,
Muſt ſhe not grieve to ſee each added minute
Fraught with new miſ'ries? thus to be a ſlave
Ev'n in my father's houſe, and from thoſe hands
Which ſhed his blood to aſk the means of life!
Think what my ſoul muſt ſuffer to behold
The curs'd Ægiſthus ſeated on the throne
Of Agamemnon, in the very robes
Which once were his; to ſee the tyrant pour
Libations forth ev'n on the fatal ſpot,
Where the ſad deed was done; but worſt of all
To ſee the murtherer uſurp his bed,
Embrace my mother, (by that honour'd name
If I may call a guilty wretch like her)
Who pleas'd returns his love, and of her crimes
Unconſcious ſmiles, nor fears th' avenging furies,
But ever as the bloody day returns

Which gave the royal victim to her wiles,
Annual the dance and choral ſong proclaim
A ſolemn feaſt, nor impious ſacrifice
Forgets ſhe then to her protecting gods.
Shock'd at the cruel banquet I retire,
And in ſome corner hide my griefs, deny'd
Ev'n the ſad comfort to indulge my ſorrows;
For Clytæmneſtra in opprobrious terms
Reviles me oft, "To thee alone, ſhe cries,
"Is Agamemnon loſt, deteſted maid!
"Think'ſt thou Electra only weeps his fate?
"Perdition on thee! may th' infernal gods
"Refuſe thee ſuccour, and protract thy pains!"
Thus rails ſhe bitter, and if chance ſhe hear
Oreſtes is approaching, ſtung with rage
Wild ſhe exclaims, "Thou art th' accurſed cauſe,
"This is thy deed, who ſtole Oreſtes from me,
"And hid him from my rage; but be aſſur'd
"E'er long my vengeance ſhall o'ertake thee for it!

Theſe

*Proclaim a ſolemn feaſt.* Nothing cou'd add more to the horror of the crime than ſuch a circumſtance. Clytæmneſtra, not content with murthering her husband, inſtitutes a ſolemn feaſt in commemoration of the happy event, and calls it, with cruel raillery, the ſupper of Agamemnon. Dinias, in his hiſtory of Argos, informs us it was on the 13th of the month Gamelion, which anſwers to the beginning of our January.

Theſe threats her noble lord ſtill urges on;
That vile adult'rer, that abandon'd coward,
Whoſe fearful ſoul call'd in a woman's aid
To execute his bloody purpoſes.
Mean-time Electra ſighs for her Oreſtes,
Her wiſh'd avenger; his unkind delay
Deſtroys my hopes; alas! my gentle friends,
Who can bear this, and keep an equal mind?
To ſuffer ills like mine, and not to err
From wild diſtraction, wou'd be ſtrange indeed.

CHORUS.

But ſay, Electra, is the tyrant near?
Or may we ſpeak our thoughts unblam'd?

ELECTRA.

Thou may'ſt;
I had not elſe beyond the palace dared
To wander hither.

CHORUS.

I wou'd fain have aſk'd thee——

ELECTRA.

Aſk what thou wilt, Ægiſthus is far off.

CHORUS.

Touching thy brother then, inform me quick
If aught thou know'ſt that merits firm belief.

ELECTRA.

ELECTRA.

He promiſes, but comes not.

CHORUS.

Things of moment
Require deliberation and delay.

ELECTRA.

O! but did I delay to ſave Oreſtes?

CHORUS.

He boaſts a noble nature, and will ne'er
Forget his friends: be confident.

ELECTRA.

I am,
Were I not ſo I had not liv'd till now,

CHORUS.

But ſoft; behold the fair Chryſothemis
Advance this way, and in her hand ſhe bears
Sepulchral offerings to the ſhades below.



*Sepulchral offerings.* The libations, or ſepulchral offerings here mention'd, were generally honey, wine, milk, water, and barley-flour; theſe were deſign'd to render the ghoſt kind and propitious, and were therefore call'd χοαι ἱλάσιμοι or μείλιχιοι; theſe were pour'd upon the ground or grave-ſtone, and together with a certain form of words offer'd to the deceaſed.

## SCENE IV.

CHRYSOTHEMIS, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

Still, my Electra, pouring forth thy griefs?
Art thou not yet by ſad experience taught
How little they avail? I too muſt feel
And cou'd reſent, as, were thy ſiſter's pow'r
But equal to her will, our foes ſhou'd know.
Mean time with lower'd ſails to bear the ſtorm
Befits us beſt, nor, helpleſs as we are,
With idle hopes to meditate revenge;
Yield then with me, and tho' impartial juſtice
Plead on thy ſide, remember, if we prize
Or life or liberty, we muſt obey.

ELECTRA.

It ill becomes great Agamemnon's daughter
Thus to forget her noble father's worth,
And take a baſe unworthy mother's part;
For well I ſee from whom thy counſels flow;
Nought from thyſelf thou ſay'ſt but all from her:
Either thy reaſon's loſt or if thou haſt it,
Thou haſt forgot thy friends who ſhou'd be dear
And precious to thee: of thy boaſted hate
Againſt our foes, and what thou vaunt'ſt to do,

If thou had'ſt pow'r, I reck not; whilſt with me
Thou wilt not join in great revenge, but ſtill
Diſſuad'ſt me from it; is't not cowardly
To leave me thus? tell, I beg thee, tell me
What mighty gain awaits my tame ſubmiſſion,
Shou'd I ſuppreſs my griefs: I can but live,
That I do now, a wretched life indeed!
But 'tis enough for me, and I am happy
Whilſt I can torture them, and to the dead
Pay grateful honours; (if to them ſuch care
Aught grateful can beſtow) thy hate, I fear me
Is but in word: thou doſt befriend the murth'rers:
For me, not all the wealth they cou'd beſtow,
Not all the gifts which they have pour'd on thee,
Shou'd bind me to 'em: take thy coſtly banquets,
And let thy days with eaſe and pleaſure flow;
Give me but food, and I am ſatisfy'd.
I wiſh not for thy honours, nor woud'ſt thou,
If thou wer't wiſe, receive 'em at their hands.
Thou might'ſt be daughter to the beſt of fathers,
And art thy mother's only; take that name,
And henceforth all ſhall mark thee as a wretch
Who hath betray'd her father and her friends.

CHORUS.

I do intreat you, let not anger come
Between you thus; you both have reaſon'd well,
And much of mutual benefit may flow,
If each to other lend a patient ear.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

Cuſtom, my noble friends, hath made reproach
Familiar to me, and ſo well I know
Her haughty mind, I had been ſilent ſtill
But that I ſaw the danger imminent,
And came to warn her of the fatal ſtroke,
Which ſoon muſt end her, and her griefs together.

ELECTRA.

Tell me this mighty danger, if aught more
It threaten than Electra long hath borne,
I yield me to thy counſels.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

Hear me then:
Know, thou art doom'd, unleſs thou doſt refrain
Thy clam'rous griefs, far from the light of day,
And this thy native ſoil, within a cell
Diſmal and dark to ſpend the poor remains
Of thy ſad life, and there lament thy fate.

ELECTRA.

Is it decreed? muſt it in truth be ſo?

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

Soon as Ægiſthus ſhall return, it muſt.

ELECTRA.

Quick let him come; I long to ſee him here.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

Alas! what dreadful imprecations theſe!

ELECTRA.

Wou'd he were preſent, if for this he comes!

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

What! to deſtroy thee! is thy mind diſturb'd?

ELECTRA.

That I might fly for ever from thy ſight.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

Wilt thou not think how to preſerve thy life?

ELECTRA.

Mine is a bleſſed life indeed to think of.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

It might be bleſt, if thou woud'ſt have it ſo.

ELECTRA.

Teach me not baſely to betray my friends.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

I do not; all I aſk thee is to yield
To pow'rs ſuperior.

ELECTRA.

Fawn on them thyſelf;
Thou doſt not know Electra.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

Sure it better
Deſerves the name of wiſdom to avoid
Than haſten thy deſtruction.

ELECTRA.

No, to dye
Were pleaſure, cou'd I but avenge my father.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

Our father, doubt it not, will pardon thee.

ELECTRA.

'Tis mean to think ſo.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

Wilt thou not conſent?

ELECTRA,

Never O! never be my ſoul ſo weak.

CHRYSOTHEMIS,

Then to my errand: fare thee well.

ELECTRA.

To whom,
Chryſothemis, and whither doſt thou bear
Thoſe ſacred off'rings?

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

To our father's tomb
From Clytæmneſtra.

ELECTRA.

To the man ſhe hated?
The man, my ſiſter——

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

Whom ſhe kill'd, I know
Thou wou'dſt have ſaid.

ELECTRA.

Why, what ſhou'd move her to it?

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

If I miſtake not, horrors late impreſs'd
From a ſad viſion.

ELECTRA.

O! my country's gods,
Succour me now!

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

What hopes doſt thou conceive
From this?

ELECTRA.

The dream: and I will tell thee all.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

I know but little of it.

ELECTRA.

Tell me that:

Oft'times to words, how few ſoe'er they be,
Is giv'n the pow'r to ſave or to deſtroy.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

Once more to light return'd (ſo fame reports)
Before her our lov'd father did appear,
The royal ſceptre wielded in his hand
Which now Ægiſthus bears, whence ſeem'd to ſpring
A green and leafy branch, whoſe wide extent
O'er all Mycenæ ſpread its verdant ſhade.
This did I learn, and this alone, from one
Who liſten'd long attentive while ſhe told
Her viſion to the ſun; hence all her fears,
And hence my deſtin'd journey.

ELEC-

*Once more to light, &c.* In the Coephori of Æſchylus, Clytæmneſtra dreams that ſhe was brought to bed of a dragon to whom ſhe gives ſuck, and who draws out all her blood. Sophocles, who borrow'd this incident from his predeceſſor, has alter'd and improved it; the circumſtances here related are more intereſting, and the interpretation more obvious; beſides that, it is render'd inſtrumental to the plan of the drama, by ſending Chryſothemis to her father's tomb, where ſhe finds the offerings of Oreſtes, which prepares the diſcovery of his unexpected arrival.

*Told her viſion to the Sun.* It was cuſtomary among the antients, when they had been terrify'd by bad dreams, to open their windows in the morning, and relate their dreams to the ſun, who, they imagin'd, as he had power to diſpel the darkneſs, could alſo turn aſide all the evils which the preceding night had threat'ned them with; Apollo was therefore ſtiled ἀποτροπαος or the averter of evil, and had images erected to him under that title.

ELECTRA.

By the gods
Let me conjure thee, hear me; if thou doſt not,
Too late ſhalt thou repent, when for thy guilt
Evil o'ertake thee; O! Chryſothemis!
Never, I beg thee, to our father's tomb
Bear thou thoſe off'rings; 'twere a horrid deed,
From ſuch a woman; give 'em to the winds,
Let them be hid, deep bury'd in the ſands,
And not the ſmalleſt grain eſcape to reach
That hallow'd place; let 'em remain for her,
Safe in the earth till ſhe ſhall meet 'em there.
None but this ſhameleſs, this abandon'd woman
Wou'd e'er with impious off'rings thus adorn
The tomb of him ſhe murther'd: by the dead
Think'ſt thou ſuch gifts can be with joy receiv'd?
Gifts from that hand, which from his mangled corſe
Sever'd his lifeleſs limbs, and on the head



*Sever'd his lifeleſs limbs.* The word εμαχαλιϑη in the original, and which is made uſe of by Æſchylus alſo, is ſuppoſed by the commentators to allude to a ſuperſtitious cuſtom of achrotireſing, or cutting off the external parts of the perſon ſlain, and fixing them under their arm-pits; a kind of charm, which the murtherer imagined would prevent him from ſending the furies to revenge his murther.

Of the poor victim wip'd her bloody ſword:
Madneſs to think that off'rings and ablutions
Cou'd purge ſuch crimes, or waſh her ſtains away;
Never, O! never: but of this no more.
Inſtant, my ſiſter, thy devoted hair
With theſe diſhevell'd locks, and this my zone,
Plain as it is and unadorn'd, ſhalt thou
Bear to our father; wretched off'rings theſe!
But O! 'tis all Electra now can give.
Bear them, and ſuppliant on thy knees implore him
To ſmile propitious, and aſſiſt his children;
Pray for Oreſtes too, that ſoon with pow'r
He may return, and trample on our foes;
So ſhall a fairer tribute one day grace
His honour'd tomb than now we can beſtow.
Truſt me, my ſiſter, we are ſtill his care,
I know, we are; from him the viſion came,
The horrid dream that ſhook her guilty ſoul:
Now then, I beg thee, be a friend to me;
Be to thyſelf a friend; a friend to him,
Of all mankind the deareſt, our dead father.

CHORUS.

*Wip'd her bloody ſword.* The murtherer wiped the inſtrument of the murther in the hair of the deceaſed, and then waſh'd it, perſuaded that this would wipe away the guilt alſo.

CHORUS.

Well doth the pious virgin ſpeak, and thou
Muſt yield to her requeſts.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

And ſo I will.

Where reaſon dictates, ſtrife ſhou'd never come;
But quick, diſpatch, fulfill her juſt commands,
Yet, O! my friends, remember, our attempt
Is full of danger, and let nought eſcape
That may betray me to my cruel mother;
For, if it reach her ear, this daring act,
I fear me much, ſhall one day coſt us dear.

[Exit Chryſothemis.

SCENE V.

CHORUS, ELECTRA.

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

Or my prophetic mind is now no more,
Attentive as of old to wiſdom's lore,



*Scene* V. This is the firſt ſong or intermede of the Chorus, who, after hearing the dream related by Chryſothemis, draw from it fair omens of Electra's ſucceſs, and vengeance on the murtherers of Agamemnon: it is remarkable that Electra remains on the ſtage all the time; a plain proof among many others that (as it is obſerved in the diſſertation) the diviſion of theſe tragedies into acts is merely arbitrary, and of late invention, as it would be abſurd for the principal character to appear thus between the acts.

Or juſtice comes, with ſpeedy vengeance fraught;
Behold! the goddeſs arm'd with pow'r appears,
It muſt be ſo, by Clytæmneſtra's fears,
And the dire dream that on her fancy wrought:
Thy father, not unmindful of his fate,
Shall hither come his wrongs to vindicate;
And, in his gore imbrued,
The fatal axe with him ſhall riſe,
Shall aſk another ſacrifice,
And drink with him the cruel tyrant's blood.

ANTISTROPHE.

Lo! with unnumber'd hands, and countleſs feet
The fury comes her deſtin'd prey to meet,
Deep in the covert hid ſhe glides unſeen,
Hangs o'er the trembling murth'rer's head,
Or ſteals to the adult'rous bed,
An awful witneſs of the guilty ſcene;
Doubtleſs the dream with all its terrors meant
For crimes like theſe ſome dreadful puniſhment,
If mortals aught from nightly viſions know,
If truth from great Apollo's ſhrine
Appears in oracles divine,
Preſaging bliſs to come, or threat'ning future woe.

EPODE.

## EPODE.

O! Pelops, to thy country and to thee,
The fatal courſe brought woe and miſery;
For ſince the time when from his chariot thrown,
For thee the guilty wreath to gain,
The hapleſs Myrtilus was ſlain,
Nought has thy wretched race but grief and ſorrow known.

End of ACT I.

*The hapleſs Myrtilus.* To underſtand this paſſage it is neceſſary to be acquainted with the following ſtory.

Oenomaus had a beautiful daughter, named Hippodamia, whom he refuſed to give in marriage, becauſe the oracle declared that a ſon in-law would be fatal to him; he promiſed however to beſtow his daughter on any man who ſhould conquer him in the chariot-race, on condition that all, who were vanquiſh'd by him, ſhould be put to death: many bold adventurers accepted the terms, and periſh'd in the attempt; the horſes of Oenomaus were ſwift as the wind, and conſequently invincible; theſe examples however did not deter Pelops, who enter'd the liſts againſt Oenomaus, and bribed his charioteer Myrtilus with a promiſe of half his kingdom if he ſucceeded; Myrtilus liſten'd to his offers, and purpoſely forgot to put the pins into the wheels of his maſter's chariot, which broke in pieces in the middle of the courſe. Pelops eſpouſed Hippodamia, but afterwards, inſtead of performing his promiſe to Myrtilus, choſe rather to get rid of this inſtrument of treachery by throwing him into the ſea. Mercury, who it ſeems was the father of Myrtilus, revenged the murther of his ſon by entailing curſes on Pelops and all his poſterity. It appears by this, that the Heathens believed that God puniſh'd the crimes of fathers upon their children to the third and fourth generation.

## ACT II.

# ACT II.

## SCENE I.

CLYTÆMNESTRA, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

CLYTÆMNESTRA.

ÆGISTHUS abſent, who alone cou'd curb
Thy haughty ſpirit, and licentious tongue;
At large, it ſeems, thou rov'ſt, and unreſtrain'd,
No def'rence paid to my authority,
But on thy mother ever pouring forth
Bitter invectives, while the liſt'ning croud
Are taught to hold me proud, and fierce of ſoul,
A lawleſs tyrant ſland'ring thee and thine:
I am no ſland'rer, I abhor the name,
But oft revil'd, of force I muſt reply,
And ſend thy foul reproaches back upon thee.
Thou ſay'ſt I ſlew thy father; that alone
Is left to plead for all thy inſolence.
I do confeſs the deed, and glory in it;
I ſlew thy father; yet not I alone,
I had the hand of juſtice to aſſiſt me,
And ſhou'd have had Electra's: well thou know'ſt
That cruel father, for whom thus thy tears

Inceſſant flow, that father ſlew his child;
He, he alone of all the Grecian hoſt
Gave up his daughter, horrid ſacrifice!
To the offended gods: he never felt
A mother's pangs, and therefore thought not of them;
Or if he did, why ſlay the innocent?
For Greece thou tell'ſt me: Greece cou'd never claim
A right to what was mine; or did ſhe fall
For Menelaus? he had children too,
Why might not they have dy'd? their parent's guilt,
Source of the war, more juſtly had deſerv'd it;
Or think'ſt thou death with keener appetite
Cou'd feaſt on mine, and Helen's not afford
As ſweet a banquet? why was all the love,
To me and to my child ſo juſtly due,
With laviſh hand beſtow'd on Menelaus?
Was he not then a baſe inhuman father?
He was: and ſo, cou'd Iphigenia ſpeak,

Thy

*He had children too.* According to Homer (See Odyſſ. b. 4.) Menelaus had only one child, Hermione. Heſiod gives him two, Hermione and Nicoſtratus: the latter tradition was more agreeable to Sophocles; becauſe, if Menelaus had but one child, the loſs would have been greater to him than to Agamemnon, who had many; this, we ſee, would deſtroy the force of Clytæmneſtra's argument, which is ſtrengthen'd by the other ſuppoſition.

*Cou'd Iphigenia ſpeak.* Clytæmneſtra endeavours to palliate her guilt by reproaching Agamemnon with the ſacrifice of Iphigenia. Euripides ſtrengthens this

Thy breathleſs ſiſter, ſhe too wou'd declare:
Know then, I grieve not; ſhame or penitence
I feel not for the deed; and if to thee
It ſeem ſo heinous, weigh each circumſtance,
Remember what he did, and lay the blame
On him who well deſerv'd the fate he ſuffer'd.

ELECTRA.

Thou haſt no plea for bitterneſs like this;
Thou can'ſt not ſay that I provok'd thee to it,
I have been ſilent: had I leave to ſpeak
I cou'd defend an injur'd father's cauſe,
And tell thee wherefore Iphigenia fell.

CLYTÆMNESTRA.

I do permit thee; and if modeſt thus
Thou had'ſt addreſs'd me always, thy free ſpeech
Had ne'er offended.

ELECTRA.

Haſt thou not confeſs'd
That thou did'ſt ſlay my father? whether juſtice
Approve or not, 'twas horrid to confeſs it;

But

this plea by the addition of another, which the ladies will allow to have been ſtill more forcible, viz. that Agamemnon kept another woman, and even brought her into the ſame houſe with his wife. The fact is thus alluded to by Ovid,

Dum fuit Atrides una contentus, & illa
Caſta fuit; vitio eſt improba facta viri.

But juſtice never cou'd perſuade thee, no;
I'll tell thee who it was, it was Ægiſthus,
The wretch with whom thou liv'ſt; go aſk the goddeſs,
Th' immortal huntreſs, why the winds were ſtay'd
So long at Aulis; but thou muſt not aſk
The chaſte Diana; take it then from me;
My father once, as for the chace prepar'd,
Careleſs he wander'd thro' her ſacred grove,
Forth from it's covert rous'd a ſpotted hind,
Of faireſt form, with tow'ring antlers grac'd,
Purſu'd and ſlew her; of the deity
Something with pride elate he utter'd then
Diſdainful; quick reſenting the affront,
Latona's daughter ſtay'd the Grecian fleet,
Nor wou'd forgive, till for her ſlaughter'd beaſt
Th' offending father ſacrific'd his child.
Thus Iphigenia fell; and but for her,



*Thou muſt not aſk the chaſte Diana.* A murtherer and adultereſs, like Clytæmneſtra, muſt not dare approach or ſpeak to the goddeſs of chaſtity. Clytæmneſtra feels the reproach, but at the ſame time, to perſuade Electra that ſhe was not affected by it, a few lines after we find her invoking that goddeſs, "by chaſte Diana, ſoon as Ægiſthus comes, &c."

*My father once &c.* There is certainly an impropriety (though not, as I remember, obſerved by any of the commentators) in relating this ſtory to Clytæmneſtra, who, we muſt ſuppoſe, could be no ſtranger to it. Sophocles, however, thought it might be neceſſary to acquaint the audience with this circumſtance, and therefore took this method to inform them of it.

Greece ne'er had ſeen or Ilion's lofty tow'rs,
Or her own native ſoil; the father ſtrove
In vain to ſave, and not for Menelaus
He gave her up at laſt, but for his country.
Suppoſe a brother's fondneſs had prevail'd,
And ſhe was giv'n for him, wou'd that excuſe
Thy horrid deed? what law requir'd it of thee?
That law alone by which thyſelf muſt fall;
If blood for blood be due, thy doom is fix'd.
Plead not ſo poorly then, but tell me why
Thou liv'ſt adult'rous thus with a vile ruffian,
Thy baſe aſſiſtant? why are thoſe, who ſprung
From thy firſt nuptials, caſt unkindly forth
For his new race? was this thy piety?
Was this too to revenge thy daughter's death?
In pure revenge to wed her deadlieſt foe
Was noble, was it not? but I forget,
You are my mother, ſo it ſeems you ſay,
And I muſt hold my peace; but I deny it;
I ſay you are my miſtreſs, not my mother;
A cruel miſtreſs that afflicts my ſoul,
And makes this weary life a burthen to me.
Oreſtes too, the hapleſs fugitive,
Who once eſcap'd thy fatal hand, now drags

A loathſome being; him, thou ſay'ſt, I look'd for
To join in my revenge, and ſo I did;
I wou'd have been reveng'd, I tell thee ſo:
Say, I am baſe, malicious, impudent,
Abuſive, what thou wilt; for if I am,
It ſpeaks my birth, and I reſemble thee.

CHORUS.

Reſentment deep hath fir'd the virgin's breaſt;
Whether with truth and juſtice on her ſide
She ſpeak, I know not.

CLYTÆMNESTRA.

Can they plead for her?
What care, what love, or tenderneſs is due
To an abandon'd child, who ſhameleſs thus
Reviles a parent? is there, after this,
A crime in nature ſhe wou'd bluſh to act?

ELECTRA.

I am not baſe, nor ſhameleſs, as thou call'ſt me,
For know, even now I bluſh for what is paſt,
Indecent warmth, and words that ill became
My tender years, and virgin modeſty;
But 'twas thy guilt, thy malice urg'd me to it;
From bad examples, bad alone we learn,
I only err'd becauſe I follow'd thee.

CLYTÆMNESTRA.

Impudent wretch! and am I then the cauſe
Of all thy clam'rous inſolence?

ELECTRA.

Thou art:
Foul is thy ſpeech, becauſe thy deed was foul;
For words from actions flow.

CLYTÆMNESTRA.

By chaſte Diana,
Soon as Ægiſthus comes, thy boldneſs meets
Its juſt reward.

ELECTRA.

Is this thy promis'd leave,
So lately granted, freely to unfold
What now incens'd thou doſt refuſe to hear?

CLYTÆMNESTRA.

Have I not heard thee, and in baſe return
With luckleſs omen doſt thou now retard
My pious ſacrifice?

ELEC-

*With luckleſs omen &c.* The antients were of opinion, that if, during the time of ſacrifice, they heard any thing melancholy, it was an ill omen; in the beginning of thoſe therefore that were public, ſilence was enjoin'd to all preſent; hence the phraſe of favete linguis.

ELECTRA.

O! far from me
Be guilt like that; perform it, I beſeech thee;
In holy ſilence ſhall theſe lips be clos'd,
And not a word eſcape to thwart thy purpoſe.

CLYTÆMNESTRA.

[ſpeaking to one of her attendants.]

Hither do thou the ſacred off'rings bring
Of various fruits compos'd, that to the god
Whoſe altars we adorn, my fervent pray'r
May riſe accepted, and diſpel my fears.
Hear then, Apollo, great protector, hear
My ſecret vows, for with no friendly ear [ſoftly.]
My voice is heard; her malice wou'd betray,
Shou'd I unveil my heart, each word I utter'd,
And ſcatter idle rumours thro' the croud.
Thus then accept my pray'rs, Lycean Phœbus! [aloud.]
If in the doubtful viſions of the night

Which

*Hear my ſecret vows.* Brumoy obſerves on this paſſage, that Clytæmneſtra here retires towards a corner of the ſcene, near the altar, where ſhe makes her prayer, and offers the ſacrifice, whilſt Electra remains upon the ſtage at a little diſtance from her; we muſt ſuppoſe her therefore, ſpeaking pa t of this ſpeech aloud, and part ſoftly, ſo as not to be over-heard by Electra; ſhe implores Apollo to mark rather the purport, than the words of her prayer; this ſhe utters in a low voice, till ſhe comes to, Lycean Phœbus, &c. which ſhe ſpeaks aloud.

Which broke my ſlumbers, aught preſaging good
Thou ſee'ſt, propitious O! confirm it all;
But if of dire portent, and fraught with ill
To me and mine they came, avert the omen,
And ſend the evil back upon my foes!
O! if there are, whoſe fraudful arts conſpire
To caſt me forth from all my preſent bliſs,
Let 'em not proſper, but protect me ſtill!
Grant me to live and reign in quiet here,
To ſpend each happy hour with thoſe I love;
With thoſe my children who have ne'er offended
By malice, pride and bitterneſs of ſoul.
Grant this, indulgent Phœbus! what remains
Unaſk'd, thou ſee'ſt; for nought eſcapes the eye
Of gods, ſuch knowledge have the ſons of Jove!

## SCENE II.

GOVERNOR of ORESTES, CLYTÆMNESTRA, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

GOVERNOR.

Is this the royal palace of Ægiſthus?

CHORUS.

*With thoſe my children &c.* Iphianaſſa and Chryſothemis, who had not affronted her; in oppoſition to Electra, who had.

*What remains unaſk'd, &c.* Moſt probably the death of Oreſtes and Electra, which ſhe did not dare to mention in the preſence of her daughter. Clytæmneſtra's character is finely drawn; her very prayers we ſee are wicked, and agreeable to her actions.

CHORUS.

Stranger, it is.

GOVERNOR.

And this, for ſuch her form
And look majeſtic ſpeak her, is his queen;
Is it not ſo?

CHORUS.

It is.

GOVERNOR.

Great ſov'reign, hail!
With joyful news I come, and from a friend,
To thee and to Ægiſthus.

CLYTÆMNESTRA.

Stranger, welcome;
Say, firſt, from whom thy meſſage?

GOVERNOR.

From Phanoteus
A Phocian ſends thee things of utmoſt moment.

CLYTÆMNESTRA.

Of moment ſay'ſt thou? what? impart them quick;
Of friendly import, if from thence they come,
I know they muſt be.

GOVERNOR.

Briefly then, 'tis this:

Oreſtes

Oreſtes is no more.

ELECTRA.

Undone Electra!

Now am I loſt indeed.

CLYTÆMNESTRA.

What ſay'ſt thou? ſpeak,

Regard not her; go on.

GOVERNOR.

I ſay again,

Oreſtes is no more.

ELECTRA.

Then what am I?

I too am nothing.

CLYTÆMNESTRA. [to Electra.]

Get thee hence, away!

Diſturb us not: moſt welcome meſſenger;

[to the Governor.]

Go on, I beg thee, let me hear it all;

Say how he dy'd; tell ev'ry circumſtance.

GOVERNOR.

For that I came, and I will tell thee all.

Know then, Oreſtes at the Pythian games,

Eager

*Oreſtes at the Pythian games, &c.* Our modern critics will perhaps be of opinion, that this deſcription of the Pythian games, ſo much admired by the favourers

Eager for glory met aſſembled Greece;
Soon as the herald's far-reſounding voice
Proclaim'd the courſe, the graceful youth appear'd,
And was by all admir'd: ſucceſsful ſoon
He reach'd the goal, and bore his prize away.
Ne'er did theſe eyes behold ſuch feats perform'd
By mortal ſtrength; in ev'ry courſe ſuperior
He roſe victorious: theme of ev'ry tongue
Was the brave Argive, great Atrides' ſon,
Who led the Græcian hoſt; but O! in vain
Doth human valour ſtrive, when pow'r divine
Purſues vindictive! the ſucceeding morn
Uproſe the ſun, and with him all the train
Of youthful rivals in the chariot race;
One from Achaia, one from Sparta came,



ers of antiquity, is too long, and rather interrupts than carries on the buſineſs of the drama; it will be in vain therefore to inform them, that this circumſtantial detail was neceſſary to give the ſtory an air of veracity in the eyes of the perſon to whom it is related, at the ſame time that the author had by this means an opportunity of ſhewing his poetical and deſcriptive talents in the narration.

*In ev'ry courſe ſuperior, &c.* The πενταθλον or quinquertium, here alluded to, conſiſted of five exerciſes, viz. leaping, running, throwing, darting, and wreſtling; Oreſtes conquer'd in every one of them; this was the buſineſs of the firſt day of the games, the ſecond was employ'd in the chariot-race, which is here minutely and accurately deſcribed.

*One from Achaia, &c.* In the Greek it is the firſt from Achaia, the ſecond from Sparta, and ſo on to the tenth, which would have made an awkward appearance in Engliſh; I have therefore taken the liberty to vary the method of enumerating them in the tranſlation.

Of Afric's ſons advanc'd a noble pair,
And join'd the throng; with theſe Oreſtes drove
His ſwift Theſſalian ſteeds; Ætolia next
For yellow courſers fam'd; and next Magneſia;
And Athens, built by hands divine, ſent forth
Her ſkilful charioteer; an Ænian next
Drove his white Horſes thro' the field; and laſt
A brave Bæotian clos'd the warrior train.
And now in order rang'd, as each by lot
Determin'd ſtood, forth at the trumpet's ſound
They ruſh'd together, ſhook their glitt'ring reins,
And laſh'd their foaming courſers o'er the plain.
Loud was the din of ratt'ling cars involv'd
In duſty clouds; cloſe on each other preſt
The rival youths, together ſtopt, and turn'd
Together all: the hapleſs Ænian firſt,
His fiery ſteeds impatient of ſubjection,
Entangled on the Lybian chariot hung;
Confuſion ſoon and terror thro' the croud
Diſaſtrous ſpread; the jarring axles rung;

Wheel

*Athens, built by hands divine.* Sophocles, who was an Athenian, takes every opportunity of doing honour to his countrymen; Athens, we ſee, is diſtinguiſh'd by him in the liſt as built by hands divine; and the Athenian charioteer ſelected from the rival chiefs, to contend with his hero Oreſtes, who had eaſily overcome all the reſt.

Wheel within wheel now crack'd, till Chryſa's field
Was with the ſcatter'd ruins quite o'erſpread.
Th' Athenian cautious view'd the diſtant danger,
Drew in the rein, and turn'd his car aſide,
Then paſt them all. Oreſtes, who ſecure
Of conqueſt lagg'd behind, with eager pace
Now urg'd his rapid courſe, and ſwift purſu'd.
Sharp was the conteſt; now th' Athenian firſt,
And now Oreſtes o'er his courſers hung,
Now ſide by ſide they ran; when to the laſt
And fatal goal they came, Atrides' ſon,
As chance with ſlacken'd rein he turn'd the car,
Full on the pillar ſtruck, tore from the wheel
Its brittle ſpokes, and from his ſeat down drop'd
Precipitate; entangled in the reins
His fiery courſers dragg'd him o'er the field,
Whilſt ſhrieking crouds with pity view'd the youth,
Whoſe gallant deeds deſerv'd a better fate.
Scarce cou'd they ſtop the rapid car, or looſe
His mangled corſe, ſo drench'd in blood, ſo chang'd,
That ſcarce a friend cou'd ſay it was Oreſtes.
Strait on the pile they burnt his ſad remains,
And, in an urn enclos'd, a choſen few
From Phocis ſent have brought his aſhes home,

To reap due honours in his native land.
Thus have I told thee all, a dreadful tale!
But O! how far more dreadful to behold it,
And be like me a witneſs of the ſcene!

CHORUS.

Ah me! the royal race, the antient houſe
Of my lov'd maſter is no more!

CLYTÆMNESTRA.

Great Jove!
Th' event was happy, but 'tis mix'd with woe.
For, O! 'tis bitter to reflect, that life
And ſafety muſt be purchas'd by misfortunes.

GOVERNOR.

Why grieve you, madam?

CLYTÆMNESTRA.

'Tis a bitter taſk
To bring forth children; tho' a mother's wrong'd,
A mother cannot hate the babe ſhe bore.

GOVERNOR.

Then with ungrateful news, in vain I came;

CLY-

*'Tis mix'd with woe.* Dacier highly commends the art of the poet in Clytæmneſtra's expreſſion of uneaſineſs at the death of Oreſtes; as to have received the news without any marks of tenderneſs or compaſſion would have been ſhocking to nature and humanity. But perhaps a better reaſon for this diſſembled ſorrow may be drawn from her willingneſs to preſerve ſome decency and appearance of virtue in the eyes of the meſſenger.

CLYTÆMNESTRA.

O no; moſt welcome is the man who brings
Such joyful tidings, that a thankleſs child
Is gone, who left a tender mother's arms,
To live a voluntary exile from me;
Ne'er to theſe eyes return'd, but abſent rag'd,
And threaten'd vengeance for his murther'd father;
Day had no reſt for me, nor did the night
Bring needful ſlumbers, thoughts of inſtant death
Appall'd me ever; but my fears are gone;
He cannot hurt me now, nor worſe than him,
This vile domeſtic plague, who haunts me ſtill
To ſuck my vital blood; but henceforth ſafe,
Spite of her threats ſhall Clytæmneſtra live.

ELECTRA.

Now, my Oreſtes, I indeed muſt mourn
Thy cruel fate, embitter'd by reproach,
And from a mother's tongue; this is not well.

CLYTÆMNESTRA.

With him it is, and wou'd it were with thee!

ELECTRA.

Attend, O! Nemeſis! and hear the dead!

CLYTÆMNESTRA.

She heard that voice which beſt deſerv'd her ear,
And her decrees are juſt.

ELECTRA.

Go on, proud woman;
Inſult us now, whilſt fortune ſmiles upon thee.

CLYTÆMNESTRA.

Doſt thou then hope that we ſhall fall hereafter?

ELECTRA.

No! we are fall'n ourſelves, and cannot hurt thee.

CLYTÆMNESTRA.

Thrice worthy is that meſſenger of joy
Whoſe gladſome news ſhall ſtop thy clam'rous tongue.

GOVERNOR.

My taſk perform'd, permit me to retire.

CLYTÆMNESTRA.

No, ſtranger, that were an affront to thee,
And to our friend who ſent thee here. Go in,
And leave that noiſy wretch to bellow forth
Her ſorrows, and bewail her loſt Oreſtes.

[Exeunt.

SCENE III.

ELECTRA, CHORUS.

ELECTRA.

Mark'd ye, my friends, did ye obſerve her tears?
Did ſhe lament him? did the mother weep
For her loſt child? O no; ſhe ſmiled and left me;

Wretched

Wretched Electra! O my dear Oreſtes!
Thou haſt undone me; thou wert all my hope.
I thought thou woud'ſt have liv'd to aid my vengeance
For our lov'd father's death; depriv'd of both
Whither ſhall I betake me! left at laſt
A ſlave to thoſe whom moſt on earth I hate,
The cruel murth'rers; muſt it then be ſo?
Never, O never! thus bereft of all,
Here will I lay me down, and on this ſpot
End my ſad days; if it offend the tyrants,
Let 'em deſtroy me; 'twill be kindly done;
Life is a pain; I wou'd not wiſh to keep it.

CHORUS.

Where is thy thunder, Jove? or, where thy pow'r,

O

*Here will I lay me down.* Electra, ſhock'd at the behaviour of Clytæmneſtra, and apprehenſive of ſtill worſe treatment than ſhe had ever yet received, is reſolv'd never to re-enter the palace of Ægiſthus; but lays herſelf down in anguiſh on the ground to lament her misfortunes. There is ſomething not unlike this in Shakeſpear's king John, where Conſtance throws herſelf on the Earth. See king John, act 3, ſcene 1.

*Where is thy thunder, Jove, &c.* I ſee no reaſon for making the alteration here propoſed by Dacier, and putting theſe words into the mouth of Electra; ſurely the reflection comes naturally from the chorus, who had been witneſſes of Clytæmneſtra's behaviour on the news of Oreſtes' death. It may not be improper here to obſerve that this is generally call'd the ſecond intermede, or ſong of the chorus; who in conjunction with Electra remaining on the ſtage, as at the end of the firſt act, ſing a kind of dirge, lamenting the miſeries of their friend, and endeavouring to comfort her under them; this is all in Strophe and Antiſtrophe, and moſt probably was ſet to muſic: it ſhou'd therefore, according to my plan, have

O Phœbus! if thou doſt behold this deed
And not avenge it?

ELECTRA.

Oh!

CHORUS.

Why mourn'ſt thou thus?

ELECTRA.

Alas!

CHORUS.

O! do not groan thus.

ELECTRA.

Thou deſtroy'ſt me.

CHORUS.

How have I hurt thee?

ELECTRA.

Why thus vainly try
To give me comfort, when I know he's dead?
You but inſult my woes.

CHORUS.

Yet weep not thus,

Think

have been put into rhyme, to diſtinguiſh it from the other parts of the drama; but as it conſiſts of queſtion and anſwer, it would have made but a ſtrange and uncouth appearance in that garb. I have therefore preſerved the blank verſe, which my readers will, I believe, think with me was much more ſuitable to it.

Think on the golden bracelet that betray'd
Amphiaraus, who now——

ELECTRA.

O! me!

CHORUS.

——In bliſs
Immortal reigns among the ſhades below.

ELECTRA.

Alas!

CHORUS.

No more; a woman was the cauſe,
Th' accurſed cauſe.

ELECTRA.

She ſuffer'd, did ſhe not?

CHORUS.

She did; ſhe periſh'd.

ELECTRA.

Yes; I know it well;
He found a kind avenger of his wrongs,
But I have none, for he is raviſh'd from me.



*The golden bracelet that betray'd Amphiaraus.* Amphiaraus was a famous ſoothſayer. During the time of the Theban war, he was ſolicited by Adraſtus to aſſiſt Polynices, his ſon-in-law. Amphiaraus, foreſeeing by his art that if he went he ſhould be ſlain, hid himſelf, but was diſcover'd by his wife Eriphyle, whom Polynices had bribed with a golden bracelet. Amphiaraus, being thus obliged to appear at the ſiege of Thebes, periſh'd there. Alcmæon his ſon revenged his father's death, and ſlew his mother Eriphyle.

CHORUS.

Thou art indeed unhappy.

ELECTRA.

'Tis too true.

I am moſt wretched, it comes thick upon me;
My ſorrows never ceaſe.

CHORUS.

We ſee thy woes.

ELECTRA.

Therefore no more attempt to bring me comfort;
There is no hope.

CHORUS.

What ſay'ſt thou?

ELECTRA.

There is none,
None left for me; my noble brother ſlain.

CHORUS.

Death is the lot of human race.

ELECTRA.

But, oh!
Not death like his; entangled in the reins,
His mangled body dragg'd along the field.

CHORUS.

A ſtrange unthought of chance.

ELECTRA.

And then to fall
A wretched ſtranger in a foreign land.

CHORUS.

O! horrible!

ELECTRA.

No ſiſter there to cloſe
His dying eyes, to grace him with a tomb,
Or pay the laſt ſad tributary tear.

[Exeunt.

End of ACT II.

# ACT III.

## SCENE I.

CHRYSOTHEMIS, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

FORGIVE me, ſiſter, if my haſty ſteps
Preſs unexpected on thee; but I come
With joyful tidings, to relieve thy toils,
And make thee happy.

ELECTRA.

What can'ſt thou have found
To ſoften ills that will admit no cure?

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

Oreſtes is arrived; as ſure as here
I ſtand before thee, the dear youth is come.

ELECTRA.

Can'ſt thou then make a mock'ry of my woes?
Or doſt thou rave?

CHRY-

*My haſty ſteps, &c.* Camerarius, in a note on this paſſage, very gravely remarks, that a lady ſhould never run, "quoniam in mulieribus cunctabunda omnia magis probantur," becauſe it's more becoming in women to do every thing deliberately. Dacier likewiſe, with the refinement of a true French critic, obſerves, that it would be highly indecent in a virgin and a princeſs to walk faſt: Sophocle, ſays he, ne manque pas à une ſeule bien-ſéance. Of ſuch ſagacious animadverſions as theſe, do principally conſiſt the illuſtrations of both the antient and modern commentators on Sophocles; ſcarce one of which (Brumoy excepted) ſeems to have read him with any taſte or judgment.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

No, by our father's gods,
I do not mean to ſcoff; but he is come.

ELECTRA.

Alas! who told thee ſo? What tongue deceiv'd
Thy credulous ear?

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

Know, from myſelf alone
I learn'd the truth, and confirmations ſtrong
Oblige me to believe it.

ELECTRA.

What firm proof
Can'ſt thou produce? what haſt thou ſeen or known
To raiſe ſuch flatt'ring hopes?

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

O! by the gods
I beg thee but to hear me, then approve
Or blame, impartial.

ELECTRA.

If to tell thy tale
Can give thee pleaſure, ſay it; I attend.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

Know then, that ſoon as to our father's tomb
Eager I came, my wond'ring eyes beheld

Down from its ſide a milky fountain flow,
As lately pour'd by ſome benignant hand;
With various flow'rs the ſacred ſpot adorn'd
Encreas'd my doubts; on ev'ry ſide I look'd
And liſten'd long impatient for the tread
Of human footſteps there; but all was peace.
Fearleſs approaching then the hallow'd ſpot,
I ſaw it ſpread with freſh devoted hair;
Inſtant my ſoul recall'd its deareſt hope,
Nor doubted whence the pious off'rings came;
I ſnatch'd them up and ſilent gaz'd, while joy
Sprang in my heart, and fill'd my eyes with tears.
They were, they muſt be his; ourſelves alone
Excepted, who cou'd bring them? 'twas not I,
And 'tis not giv'n to thee to leave theſe walls
Ev'n for the gods; our mother ſcarce wou'd do
So good an office; or ev'n grant ſhe might,
We muſt have known it ſoon; be confident,

It

*Our mother ſcarce, &c.* This aſſertion may probably appear ſtrange from the mouth of Chryſothemis, who had herſelf ſo lately been ſent by Clytæmneſtra with offerings to the tomb of Agamemnon; why therefore might not ſhe have made theſe libations alſo? There is no way of reconciling this ſeeming inconſiſtency, but by ſuppoſing that the libations here mention'd were of a different nature from the former; the firſt were an expiatory offering to turn aſide the vengeance of the deceaſed; the laſt, of that kind which was generally made uſe of to ſignify the peculiar love and affection of thoſe who made them.

It was Oreſtes then; rejoice, Electra;
Siſter, rejoice; the ſame deſtructive pow'r
Doth not for ever rule; behold at laſt
A milder god, and happier days appear.

ELECTRA.

Madneſs, and folly! how I pity thee!

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

Have I not brought moſt joyful tydings to thee.

ELECTRA.

Alas! thou know'ſt not where nor what thou art.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

Not know it? not believe what I have ſeen?

ELECTRA.

I tell thee, wretched as thou art, he's dead;
He and thy hop'd-for bliſs are gone together.
Thou muſt not think of him.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

A wretch indeed
I am, if this be ſo; but O! from whom,
Where didſt thou learn the fatal news?

ELEC-

*He's dead.* The hopes and joy of Chryſothemis are finely contraſted by the griet and deſpair of Electra. One brings the news of his arrival, the other of his death; thus the ſpectator, who is already acquainted with the truth, is made to ſympathize with the unhappy ſiſters, and grows impatient for the diſcovery. Every ſubordinate circumſtance, we ſee, by the artful conduct of the poet, is introduced to prepare the principal event, and heighten the terror and ſurpriſe of the cataſtrophe.

ELECTRA.

From one,

Who was a witneſs of his death.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

Where is he?

Amazement chills my ſoul.

ELECTRA.

He is within;

And no unwelcome gueſt to Clytæmneſtra.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

Alas! who then cou'd bring theſe pious gifts?

ELETRA.

Some friend to loſt Oreſtes plac'd them there.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

I flew with joy to tell thee better news,
And little thought to hear ſo ſad a tale.
The griefs I came to cure are preſent ſtill,
And a new weight of woes is come upon us.

ELECTRA.

But know, my ſiſter, all may yet be well,
If thou wilt hear me.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

Can I raiſe the dead?

ELEC-

ELECTRA.

I am not mad that I ſhou'd aſk it of thee.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

What wou'dſt thou have me do?

ELECTRA.

I'd have thee act
As I ſhall dictate to thee.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

If aught good
It may produce, I do conſent.

ELECTRA.

Remember,
That if we hope to proſper, we muſt bear;
Succeſs in all that's human muſt depend
On patience and on toil.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

I know it well,
And ſtand reſolv'd to bear my part in all.

ELECTRA.

Hear then the ſolemn purport of my ſoul.
Thou know'ſt too well how friendleſs and forlorn
We both are left, by death bereav'd of all
Who cou'd ſupport us; whilſt Oreſtes liv'd
I cheriſh'd flatt'ring thoughts of ſweet revenge,

But he is gone, and thou art now my hope.
Yes, thou muſt join (for I will tell thee all)
With thy Electra to deſtroy Ægiſthus,
To kill the murth'rer; why ſhou'd we delay?
Is aught of comfort left? thou can'ſt but weep
Thy raviſh'd fortunes torn unjuſtly from thee;
Thou canſt but mourn thy loſs of nuptial rites,
And each domeſtic bliſs; for O! my ſiſter,
The tyrant cannot be ſo weak of ſoul
As e'er to ſuffer our deteſted race
To ſend new branches forth for his deſtruction:
Aſſiſt me then; ſo ſhalt thou beſt deſerve
A father's praiſes and a brother's love;
So ſhalt thou ſtill, as thou wert born, be free,
And gain a partner worthy of thy bed.
Doſt thou not hear th' applauding voice of fame,
And ev'ry tongue conſpire to praiſe the deed?
Will they not mark us as we paſs along,
And cry aloud, "behold the noble pair!
"The pious ſiſters who preſerv'd their race,
"Whoſe daring ſouls, unaw'd by danger, ſought
"The tyrants life, regardleſs of their own.
"What love to theſe, what reverence is due!
"Theſe ſhall th' aſſembled nation throng to praiſe,

"And

" And ev'ry feaſt with public honours crown,
" The fit reward of more than female virtue?
Thus will they talk, my ſiſter, whilſt we live,
And after death our names ſhall be immortal.
Aid then a brother's, aid a ſiſter's cauſe,
Think on thy father's wrongs, preſerve Electra,
Preſerve thyſelf; and, O! remember well
That, to the noble mind, a life diſhonour'd
Is infamy and ſhame.

CHORUS.

Be prudence now
The guide of both.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

Her mind was ſure diſturb'd,
My friends, or ſhe wou'd ne'er have talk'd ſo wildly.
Tell me, I beg thee tell me, my Electra,
How cou'dſt thou think ſo raſh an enterprize
Cou'd e'er ſucceed, or how requeſt my aid?
Haſt thou conſider'd what thou art? a woman,
Weak and defenceleſs, to thy foes unequal.
Fortune thou ſee'ſt each hour flows in upon them,
Nor deigns to look on us: what hand ſhall deal
The fatal blow and paſs unpuniſh'd for it?
Take heed, my ſiſter, leſt, thy counſel heard,

A heavier fate than what we now lament
Fall on us both; what will our boaſted fame
Avail us then? It is not death alone
We have to fear; to die is not the worſt
Of human ills, it is to wiſh for death
And be refus'd the boon; conſider well,
E'er we deſtroy ourſelves and all our race.
Be patient, dear Electra; for thy words,
As they had ne'er been utter'd, here they reſt.
Learn to be wiſe at laſt; and when thou know'ſt
Reſiſtance vain, ſubmit to pow'rs ſuperior.

CHORUS.

Submit, convinc'd that prudence is the firſt
Of human bleſſings.

ELECTRA.

'Tis as I expected;
I knew full well thou woudſt reject my counſel,
But I can act alone; nor ſhall this arm
Shrink at the blow, or leave it's work unfiniſh'd.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

Wou'd thou hadſt ſhewn this ſo much vaunted proweſs
When our lov'd father dy'd!

ELECTRA.

I was the ſame

By nature then, but of a weaker mind.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

Be ſure thy courage fail thee not hereafter.

ELECTRA.

Thy aid will ne'er increaſe it.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

'Twill be wanted;
For thoſe, who act thus raſhly, muſt expect
The fate they merit.

ELECTRA.

I admire thy prudence,
But I deteſt thy cowardice.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

I hear thee
With patience; for the time muſt one day come
When thou ſhalt praiſe me.

ELECTRA.

Never.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

Be that left
For time to judge; enough remains.

ELECTRA.

Away;
There's no dependence on thee.

CHRY-

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

But there is,
Had'ſt thou a mind diſpos'd for it's acceptance.

ELECTRA.

Go, tell thy mother all.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

I am not yet
So much thy enemy.

ELECTRA.

And yet wou'd lead me
To infamy.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

To ſafety and to wiſdom.

ELECTRA.

Muſt I then judge as thy ſuperior reaſon
May dictate to me?

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

When thy better mind
Shall come, I'll not refuſe to follow thee.

ELECTRA.

Pity who talks ſo well, ſhou'd act ſo poorly!

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

That cenſure falls on thee.

ELECTRA.

What I have ſaid
Is truth.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

Truth, ſiſter, may be dangerous.

ELECTRA.

Rather than thus ſubmit I will not live.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

Hereafter thou wilt praiſe me.

ELECTRA.

I ſhall act
As ſeems moſt fit, nor wait for thy direction.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

Art thou reſolv'd then? wilt thou not repent
And take my counſel?

ELECTRA.

Counſel, ſuch as thine,
Is of all ills the worſt.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

Becauſe, Electra,
Thou doſt not ſeem to underſtand it.

ELECTRA.

Know then,
That long ere this I had determin'd all,

CHRY-

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

Then fare thee well; thou canſt not bear my words
Nor I thy actions.

ELECTRA.

Go thy ways; henceforth
I will not commune with thee; not thy pray'rs,
No, nor thy tears ſhou'd ever bend me to it;
Such idle commerce were the heighth of folly.

CHRYSOTHEMIS.

If thou doſt think this wiſdom, think ſo ſtill;
But when deſtruction comes, thou wilt approve
My better counſel, and be wiſe too late.

[Exeunt.

SCENE II.

CHORUS.

STROPHE I.

Man's ungrateful wretched race,
Shall the birds of heav'n diſgrace,
Whoſe ever-watchful, ever-pious young,
Protect the feeble parent whence they ſprung?

But

*Man's ungrateful, &c.* This, according to the received diviſion into five acts, is the third ſong or intermede of the chorus, and cloſes the ſecond act, which we may obſerve is thus made to conſiſt of only a ſingle ſcene; an abſurdity which need not be pointed out to the judicious reader. The chorus in this ſong, ſtruck by the piety and reſolution of Electra, lament her condition, and blame the coldneſs of Chryſothemis, who had refuſed to join her in revenging the death of their father.

But if the blaſt of angry Jove
Hath pow'r to ſtrike, or juſtice reigns above,
Not long unpuniſh'd ſhall ſuch crimes remain;
When thou, O fame! the meſſenger of woe,
Shalt bear theſe tidings to the realms below,
Tidings to Grecia's chiefs of ſorrow and of pain.

ANTISTROPHE.

Bid the ſad Atridæ mourn
Their houſe by cruel faction torn;
Tell 'em, no longer by affection join'd,
The tender ſiſters bear a friendly mind;
The poor Electra now alone,
Making her fruitleſs ſolitary moan,
Like Philomela weeps her father's fate;
Fearleſs of death and ev'ry human ill,
Reſolv'd her ſteady vengeance to fulfill;
Was ever child ſo good, or piety ſo great?

STROPHE II.

Still are the virtuous and the good
By adverſe fortune unſubdu'd,
Nor e'er will ſtoop to infamy and ſhame;
Thus Electra dauntleſs 'roſe
The War to wage with virtue's foes,
To gain the meed of never-ending fame.

ANTISTROPHE II.

Far, far above thy enemies,
In pow'r and ſplendor mayſt thou riſe,
And future bliſs compenſate preſent woe!
For thou haſt ſhewn thy pious love,
By all that's dear to heav'n above,
Or ſacred held by mortals here below.

[Exeunt.

End of ACT III.

ACT IV.

# ACT IV.

## SCENE I.

ORESTES, PYLADES, (with ATTENDANTS) ELECTRA, CHORUS.

ORESTES.

SAY, virgins, if by right inſtruction led
This way, I tend to——

CHORUS.

Whither wou'dſt thou go?

ORESTES.

The palace of Ægiſthus.

CHORUS.

Stranger, well
Wert thou directed; thou art there already.

ORESTES.

Who then amongſt your train ſhall kindly ſpeak
A friend's approach, who comes with joyful news
Of higheſt import?

CHORUS.

Be that office her's, [pointing to Electra.]
Whom bound by nature's ties it beſt befits.

ORESTES.

Go then, and ſay from Phocis are arriv'd
Who beg admittance to the king.

ELECTRA.

Alas!

And com'ſt thou then to prove the dreadful tale
Already told?

ORESTES:

What you have heard I know not,
But of Oreſtes came I here to ſpeak
By Strophius's command.

ELECTRA.

What is it, ſay;
O how I dread thy meſſage!

ORESTES. [ſhewing the urn.]

Here behold
His poor remains——

ELECTRA.

O! loſt, undone Electra!
Tis then too plain, and mis'ry is compleat.

ORESTES.

If for Oreſtes thus thy ſorrows flow,
Know that within this urn his aſhes lye.

ELEC-

*What you have heard I know not.* To prevent any ſuſpicion of fraud or connivance, Oreſtes pretends to be an utter ſtranger to the meſſage brought by the governor. The news coming thus by different hands, and at different times, confirms the report more ſtrongly, and heigthens the ſurprize at the diſcovery.

ELECTRA.

Do they indeed? then let me, by the gods
I do intreat thee, let me ſnatch them from thee,
Let me embrace them, let me weep my fate,
And mourn our hapleſs race.

ORESTES.

Give her the urn,
Whoe'er ſhe be; for not with hoſtile mind
She craves the boon; perhaps ſome friend, perhaps
By blood united.

ELECTRA. [taking the Urn.]

O! ye dear remains
Of my Oreſtes, the moſt lov'd of men!
How do I ſee thee now! how much unlike
What my fond hopes preſag'd, when laſt we parted!
I ſent thee forth with all the bloom of youth
Freſh on thy cheek, and now, O! diſmal change!
I bear thee in theſe hands an empty ſhade.
Wou'd I had dy'd e'er I had ſent thee hence,
E'er I had ſav'd thee from the tyrant's hand!
Wou'd thou had'ſt dy'd thyſelf that dreadful day,

And

*Whoe'er ſhe be.* Oreſtes muſt already imagine that the perſon he talk'd to was one of his ſiſters; but as he had been ſo long abſent could not be ſure that it was Electra; the chorus ſoon after puts him out of doubt by mentioning her name.

And join'd thy murther'd father in the tomb,
Rather than thus a wretched exile fall'n,
Far from thy ſiſter, in a foreign land!
I was not there with pious hands to waſh
Thy breathleſs corps, or from the greedy flame
To gather up thy aſhes; what have all
My pleaſing toils, my fruitleſs cares avail'd,
Ev'n from thy infant years, that as a mother
I watch'd thee ſtill, and as a mother lov'd?
I wou'd not truſt thee to a ſervant's hand,
But was myſelf the guardian of thy youth,
Thy dear companion; all is gone with thee;
Alas! thy death, like the devouring ſtorm,
Hath borne down all; my father is no more,
And thou art gone, and I am going too;
Our foes rejoice; our mother, mad with joy,
Smiles at our mis'ries; that unnat'ral mother,

She

*To waſh thy breathleſs corps.* The cuſtom of waſhing the body of the deceaſed is very antient; this office was always perform'd by the neareſt relations; Socrates as we are inform'd by Plato, waſh'd himſelf before his execution, probably to prevent it's being done by ſtrangers; Alceſtis, likewiſe, in Euripides, after ſhe had determined to dye for her huſband, waſhes herſelf. The Romans adopted this cuſtom from the Greeks; and we find the mother of Euryalus, making the ſame complaint as Electra,

Nec te tua funera mater
Produxi, preſſive oculos aut vulnera lavi.
VIRG. Æn. l. 9.

She whom thou oft has promis'd to deſtroy;
But cruel fate hath blaſted all my hopes,
And for my dear Oreſtes, left me nought
But this poor ſhadow: O! th' accurſed place,
Where I had ſent thee! O! my hapleſs brother,
Thou haſt deſtroy'd Electra; take me then,
O! take me to thee! let this urn encloſe
My aſhes too, and duſt to duſt be join'd,
That we may dwell together once again;
In life united by one hapleſs fate,
I wou'd not wiſh in death to be divided;
The dead are free from ſorrows.

CHORUS.

Fair Electra!
Do not indulge thy griefs; but, O! remember,
Sprung from a mortal like thyſelf, Oreſtes
Was mortal too, that we are mortal all.

ORESTES. [aſide.]

What ſhall I ſay? I can refrain no longer.

ELECTRA.

Why this emotion?

ORESTES.

*Duſt to duſt.* In the original, it is την μηδεν εις το μηδεν, "nothing to "nothing;" I have taken the liberty to adopt a phraſe familiar to ourſelves, and which equally expreſſes the ſenſe of my author.

ORESTES. [looking at Electra.]

Can it be Electra?

That lovely form?

ELECTRA.

It is indeed that wretch.

ORESTES.

O! dreadful!

ELECTRA.

Stranger, doſt thou weep for me?

ORESTES.

By impious hands to periſh thus!

ELECTRA.

For me

Doubtleſs thou weep'ſt, for I am chang'd indeed.

ORESTES.

Of nuptial rites, and each domeſtic joy

To live depriv'd!

ELECTRA.

Why doſt thou gaze upon me?

ORESTES.

Alas! I did not know I was ſo wretched.

ELECTRA.

Why, what hath made thee ſo?

ORESTES.

ORESTES.

I ſee thy woes.

ELECTRA.

Not half of them.

ORESTES.

Can there be worſe than theſe!

ELECTRA.

To live with murtherers!

ORESTES.

What murth'rers, whom?

ELECTRA.

The murth'rers of my father; bound to ſerve them.

ORESTES.

Who binds thee?

ELECTRA.

One who calls herſelf a mother;
A name ſhe little merits.

ORESTES.

But ſay, how?
Doth ſhe withhold the means of life, or act
With brutal violence to thee?

ELECTRA.

Both, alas!
Are my hard lot; ſhe trys a thouſand means

To make me wretched.

ORESTES.

And will none aſſiſt,

Will none defend thee?

ELECTRA.

None. My only hope

Lies buried there.

ORESTES.

O! how I pity thee!

ELECTRA.

'Tis kindly done; for none will pity me,
None but thyſelf; art thou indeed a ſtranger,
Or doth ſome nearer tye unite our ſorrows?

ORESTES.

I cou'd unfold a tale;—but, ſay, theſe virgins,
May I depend on them?

ELECTRA.

They are our friends,

And faithful all.

ORSSTES.

Then lay the urn aſide,

And I will tell thee.

ELECTRA.

Do not take it from me;

Do not, dear ſtranger.

ORESTES.

But I muſt indeed.

ELECTRA.

Do not, I beg thee.

ORESTES.

Come, you'll not repent it.

ELECTRA.

O! my poor brother! if thy dear remains
Are wreſted from me, I am moſt unhappy.

ORESTES.

No more; thou muſt not grieve for him.

ELECTRA.

Not grieve
For my Oreſtes?

ORESTES.

No; you ſhou'd not weep.

ELECTRA.

Am I unworthy of him then?

ORESTES.

O! no!
But do not grieve.

ELECTRA.

Not when I bear the aſhes

Of my dear brother!

ORESTES.

But, they are not there,
Unleſs by fiction, and a well-wrought tale
That hath deceiv'd thee.

ELECTRA.

Where then is his tomb?

ORESTES.

The living need none.

ELECTRA.

Ha! what ſay'ſt thou?

ORESTES.

Truth.

ELECTRA.

Does he then live?

ORESTES.

If I have life, he lives.

ELECTRA.

And art thou he?

ORESTES.

Look here, and be convinc'd;

This

*The living need none.* The Greek is τȣ ζωντος ȣκ εϛι ταφος, which I have tranſlated literally. Brumoy, who is ſeldom guilty of miſtakes, has let the ſenſe ſlip him, and only ſays, "il eſt plein de vie."

This mark, 'tis from our father.

ELECTRA.

O! bleſt hour!

ORESTES.

Bleſſed indeed!

ELECTRA.

Art thou then here?

ORESTES.

I am.

ELEC-

*This mark.* What this mark was, has greatly puzzled the commentators; the ſcholiaſts, whoſe conjectures are generally whimſical, will needs have it to be ſome remains of the ivory ſhoulder of Pelops, which was viſible in all his deſcendants, as thoſe of Cadmus were mark'd with a lance, and the Seleucidæ with an anchor. Camerarius, and after him Brumoy, call it a ring, or ſeal, which indeed is the moſt natural interpretation of the Greek word σφραγις; though it may be ſaid in ſupport of the other opinion, that the natural or bodily mark was more certain, and therefore a better proof of identity in regard to the perſon of Oreſtes.

*Art thou then here?* This diſcovery is doubtleſs the principal and moſt intereſting ſcene in the tragedy of Electra, and upon the whole much better conducted by Sophocles than by either of his rivals on the ſame ſubject. The effect which it had upon the audience, was, we may imagine, equal to its merit. Aulus Gellius tells us a remarkable ſtory of a certain actor, named Polus, who having undertaken the part of Electra, in order to enter more fully into the character he was to repreſent, brought upon the ſtage an urn containing the aſhes of his own ſon, which he wept over and embraced as the aſhes of Oreſtes; his feelings were ſo intenſe, and his performance ſo exquiſite on this occaſion, that the ſpectators no longer conſider'd it as a mere repreſentation, but were fill'd with real grief, and diſſolved in tears.

Dacier is of opinion that the dialogue between Oreſtes and Electra on this occaſion, is too prolix, and muſt be ſhorten'd before it could meet with any applauſe on a modern theatre.

ELECTRA.

Do I embrace thee?

ORESTES.

May'ſt thou do it long!

ELECTRA.

O! my companions! O! my deareſt friends!
Do ye not ſee Oreſtes, once by art
And cruel fiction torn from Life and me,
But now by better art to life reſtor'd?

CHORUS.

Daughter, we do; and ſee 'midſt all our woes
From ev'ry eye faſt flow the tears of joy.

ELECTRA.

O! ye are come, my friends, in happieſt hour,
Ev'n to behold, to find again the man
Whom your ſouls wiſh'd for, ye are come.

CHORUS.

We are;
But O! in ſilence hide thy joys, Electra.

ELECTRA.

Wherefore in ſilence?

CHORUS.

*O! ye are come, &c.* From this place, to that ſpeech of Oreſtes which begins with, ſpend not thy time, &c, and which contains in the Greek near fifty ſhort lines, the original is in Strophe and Antiſtrophe: I have made no change in the meaſure of the tranſlation, for the reaſon given in a preceding note.

CHORUS.

Leſt our foes within
Shou'd hear thee.

ELECTRA.

Never, by the virgin pow'r
Of chaſte Diana, will I hide my joys,
Nor meanly ſtoop to fear an idle throng
Of helpleſs women.

ORESTES.

Women have their pow'r,
And that thou know'ſt.

ELECTRA.

Alas! and ſo I do;
For O! thou haſt call'd back the ſad remembrance
Of that misfortune which admits no cure,
And ne'er can be forgot.

ORESTES.

A fitter time
May come when we muſt think of that.

ELECTRA.

All times,
All hours are fit to talk of juſtice in,
And beſt the preſent, now when I am free.

ORESTES.

ORESTES.

Thou art ſo, be ſo ſtill.

ELECTRA.

What's to be done?

ORESTES.

Talk not, when prudence ſhou'd reſtrain thy tongue.

ELECTRA.

Who ſhall reſtrain it? who ſhall bind Electra
To fearful ſilence, when Oreſtes comes?
When thus I ſee thee here, beyond my thoughts,
Beyond my hopes.

ORESTES.

The gods have ſent me to thee;
They bad me come.

ELECTRA.

Indeed? more grateful ſtill
Is thy return; if by the gods command
Thou cam'ſt, the gods will ſure protect thee here.

ORESTES.

I wou'd not damp thy joys, and yet I fear
Leſt they ſhou'd carry thee too far.

ELECTRA.

O! no!
But after ſo long abſence, thus return'd

To thy afflicted ſiſter; ſure thou woud'ſt not——

ORESTES.

Do what?

ELECTRA.

Thou woud'ſt not grudge me the dear pleaſure
Of looking on thee.

ORESTES.

No; nor ſuffer any
To rob thee of it.

ELECTRA.

Shall I then?

ORESTES.

No doubt.

ELECTRA.

I hear that voice, my friends, I never thought
To hear again; ye know, when I receiv'd
The dreadful news, I kept my grief within,
Silent and ſad; but now I have thee here,
Now I behold thee, now I fix my eyes
On that dear form, which never was forgotten.

ORESTES.

Spend not thy time in fruitleſs words, nor tell me
How Clytæmneſtra lives, nor how Ægiſthus
Hath laviſh'd all our wealth; the preſent hour

Demands our ſtrict attention; tell me how,
Whether by fraud, or open force, our foes
May beſt be vanquiſh'd; let no chearful ſmile
Betray thee to thy mother; ſeem to grieve
As thou wert wont; when we have done the deed,
Joy ſhall appear, and we will ſmile in ſafety.

ELECTRA.

Thy will is mine; not to myſelf I owe
My preſent bliſs, I have it all from thee,
From thee, my brother; nor ſhou'd aught perſuade me
To give Oreſtes ev'n a moment's pain.
That were ungrateful to th' indulgent pow'r,
Who thus hath ſmil'd propitious. Know, Ægiſthus
Has left the palace; Clytæmneſtra's there;
And for thy needleſs fears that I ſhou'd ſmile,
Or wear a chearful face, I never ſhall;
Hatred ſo ſtrong is rooted in my ſoul,
The ſight of them will make me ſad enough.
The tears of joy perhaps may flow for thee,
And add to the deceit; for flow they muſt,
When I behold thee in one happy hour
Thus ſnatch'd from life, and thus to life reſtor'd.
I cou'd not hope it; O! 'tis paſſing ſtrange!
If from the tomb our father ſhou'd ariſe,

And ſay he liv'd, I think I ſhou'd believe him;
And O! when thou art come ſo far, 'tis fit
I yield to thee in all, do thou direct
My ev'ry ſtep; but know, had I been left
Alone, ev'n I wou'd not have fail'd in all,
But conquer'd bravely, or as bravely fell.

ORESTES.

No more. I hear the footſteps as of one
Coming this way.

ELECTRA.

Strangers, go in, and bear
That which with joy they cannot but receive,
But which with joy they will not long poſſeſs.

## SCENE II.

GOVERNOR of ORESTES, ELECTRA, ORESTES, CHORUS.

GOVERNOR.

Madneſs and folly thus to linger here!
Have ye no thought? is life not worth your care?
Do ye not know the dangers that ſurround you?



*Strangers, go in, &c.* Electra, inform'd that ſome one was coming towards them, changes her tone and manner, and addreſſes Oreſtes and Pylades as ſtrangers; what ſhe ſays, we may obſerve, is purpoſely ambiguous, as ſhe was apprehenſive of being over-heard.

Had I not watch'd myſelf before the palace,
E'er ye had enter'd, all your ſecret plan
Had been diſcover'd to our foes within;
Wherefore no more of this tumultuous joy,
And lengthen'd converſe; 'tis not fitting now,
Go in; away, delays are dangerous
At ſuch an hour; our fate depends upon it.

ORESTES.

May I with ſafety? is all well within?

GOVERNOR.

None can ſuſpect you.

ORESTES.

Spake you of my death
As we determin'd?

GOVERNOR.

Living as thou art,
They do account thee one among the dead.

ORESTES.

And are they glad? what ſay they?

GOVERNOR.

By and by
We'll talk of that; let it ſuffice, that all
Is right within; and that which moſt they think ſo,
May prove moſt fatal to them.

ELEC-

ELECTRA. [pointing to the GOVERNOR.]

Who is this?

ORESTES.

Do you not know?

ELECTRA.

I cannot recollect him.

ORESTES.

Not know the man to whom you truſted me?
Under whoſe care——

ELECTRA.

When? how?

ORESTES.

To Phocis ſent,
I 'ſcap'd the tyrant.

ELECTRA.

Can it then be he,
Among the faithleſs only faithful found
When our dear father fell?

ORESTES.

It is the ſame.

ELECTRA. [to the GOVERNOR.]

Deareſt of men, great guardian of our race,
Art thou then here? thou, who haſt ſav'd us both

From

From countleſs woes; ſwift were thy feet to bring
Glad tidings to me, and thy hand ſtretch'd forth
It's welcome ſuccour; but, O! why deceive me?
Why woud'ſt thou kill me with thy dreadful tale,
Ev'n when thou had'ſt ſuch happineſs in ſtore?
Hail! father, hail! for I muſt call thee ſo,
Know, thou haſt been to me, in one ſhort day,
Both the moſt hated, and moſt lov'd of men.

GOVERNOR.

No more of that; we ſhall have time enough
To talk of it hereafter; let us go;
This is the hour; the queen is now alone,
And not a man within; if ye delay,
Expect to meet more formidable foes,
In wiſdom and in numbers far ſuperior.

ORESTES.

We will not talk, my Pylades, but act.
Let us go in; but to the gods, who guard
This place, be firſt due adoration paid.

ELECTRA.

Hear then, Apollo, great Lycæan, hear Their

*Swift were thy feet, &c.* The expreſſion in the original is remarkable; ἡδίσον ἔχων ποδῶν ὑπηρέτημα, dulciſſimum habens pedum miniſterium; not unlike that of the prophet Iſaiah, "how beautiful upon the mountains are the "feet of him that bringeth glad tidings!"

*Hear then, Apollo, &c.* Electra's prayer is made before the altar of Apollo, which ſtood at the entrance of the palace, where Clytæmneſtra had paid her devotions

Their humble pray'r! O! hear Electra too,
Who with unſparing hand her choiceſt gifts
Hath never fail'd to lay before thy altars;
Accept the little all which now remains
For me to give, accept my humbleſt pray'rs,
My vows, my adorations; ſmile propitious
On all our counſels! O! aſſiſt us now,
And ſhew mankind what puniſhment remains
For guilty mortals from offended heav'n.

[Exeunt.

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

Behold, he comes! the ſlaughter-breathing god
Mars, ever thirſting for the murth'rer's blood;
And ſee the dogs of war are cloſe behind;

Nought

devotions in the former ſcene; this gives an air of ſolemnity to the action, and leſſens the horror of the murther, by repreſenting it as an act of piety, and agreeable to the will of heaven.

*Behold he comes &c.* This is the fourth intermede or ſong of the chorus, and is ſuppoſed to divide the fourth and fifth acts; it is ſhorter, we may obſerve, than any of the reſt, probably ſo contrived by the author, to relieve the impatience of the ſpectator, who is naturally eager to ſee the cataſtrophe; it is not therefore a time to amuſe him with poetry and deſcription, but to prepare him for the event; which is here done in a few words, finely adapted to that purpoſe.

*The dogs of war.* Κυνες αφυκτοι, gr. canes inevitabiles. Shakeſpear has exactly the ſame image, "Cry havock, and let ſlip the dogs of war."
See prologue to Henry the fifth.

Nought can eſcape their all-devouring rage;
This did my conſcious heart long ſince preſage,
And the fair dream that ſtruck my raptur'd mind.

ANTISTROPHE.

Th' avenger ſteals along with ſilent feet,
And ſharpen'd ſword, to his paternal ſeat,
His injur'd father's wrongs to vindicate;
Conceal'd from all by Maia's fraudful ſon,
Who ſafe conducts him till the deed be done,
Nor longer will delay the needful work of fate.

[Exeunt.

*Maia's fraudful ſon.* Mercury was the god of fraud and treachery, and call'd δολιος, or the deceiver; to him therefore was attributed all ſecret ſchemes and expeditions, good or bad. The propriety of Mercury's peculiar aſſiſtance in this place may likewiſe be accounted for from his relation to Myrtilus who was ſlain by Pelops.

End of ACT IV.

## ACT V.

# ACT V.

## SCENE I.

ELECTRA, CHORUS.

ELECTRA.

O! my dear friends, they are about it now,
The deed is doing; but be ſtill.

CHORUS.

What deed?
How? where?

ELECTRA.

She doth prepare the fun'ral banquet;
But they are not far from her.



*O! my dear friends, &c.* To avoid the horror of a murther on the ſtage, which, however familliar to us, the antients conſider'd as ſhocking and diſguſtful, Sophocles has contrived that it ſhall be done within the palace; but as Electra had received no commands from the oracle to revenge the death of Agamemnon, there would have been an indecency and impropriety in making her a witneſs or acceſſary to the murther: ſhe therefore leaves her brother to kill Clytæmneſtra, and comes out; which at the ſame time gives her an opportunity of watching the arrival of Ægiſthus, and preventing any interruption from him. The appearance of Electra on the ſtage in this place is abſolutely neceſſary, as without it no reaſon could be aſſign'd for the return of Oreſtes; and thus the reſt of the buſineſs of the drama muſt have been tranſacted out of ſight of the audience, who would conſequently remain ſtrangers to the cataſtrophe.

*The fun'ral banquet.* The Greek is λεβητα κοσμει, lebetem parat, alluding to the περιδειπνον, or funeral banquet, which was uſually ſpread on the tomb of the deceaſed by the neareſt relation. This banquet Electra imagines that Clytæmneſtra was already preparing for Oreſtes, whom ſhe ſuppoſed dead: but they, ſays ſhe, are not far from her; that is, they who are preparing one for her. The ſentence, we ſee, is purpoſely left unfiniſh'd.

CHORUS.

Why then leave them?

ELECTRA.

To watch Ægiſthus, leſt he ſteal upon us
And blaſt our purpoſe.

CLYTÆMNESTRA.

[Behind the ſcenes.]

O! I am betray'd!
My palace full of murth'rers; not a friend
Left to protect me.

ELECTRA.

Some one cries within;
Did you not hear?

CHORUS.

It is too horrible
For mortal ear; I tremble at the ſound.

CLYTÆMNESTRA. [within]

Ægiſthus, O! where art thou?

ELECTRA.

Hark! again
The voice, and louder.

CLY-

*Some one cries within.* Dacier puts theſe words into the mouth of one of the women that compoſe the chorus; becauſe, (ſays he) Electra would never have ſaid "*ſome one* cries out," as ſhe knew it muſt be Clytæmneſtra. The reader may take his choice in regard to this alteration; I have left it as it ſtands in the original, being a matter of no great conſequence.

CLYTÆMNESTRA. [within.]

O! my child, my child!

Pity thy mother, pity her who bore thee.

ELECTRA.

Be thine the pity which thou ſhewd'ſt to him,
And to his father.

CHORUS.

O! unhappy kingdom!

O! wretched race! thy miſery is full;
This day will finiſh all.

CLYTÆMNESTRA. [within]

O! I am wounded!

ELECTRA.

Another ſtroke. Another, if thou can'ſt.



*O! unhappy kingdom!* The chorus, though ſatisfied that Clytæmneſtra deſerved to die, and that this action of Oreſtes was commanded by the gods, are notwithſtanding ſhock'd at the execution of it: they lament the preſent, and expreſs their fear of future miſeries in the houſe of Pelops: it is impoſſible, in their opinion, that a family could ever proſper where a wife had kill'd her huſband, and a child murther'd his mother. There is ſomething in this reflection ſtriking and pathetic.

*Another ſtroke, &c.* "Ce mot fait fremir," (ſays Brumoy) "theſe words make one ſhudder." Dacier is likewiſe of opinion that all the art of the poet is inſufficient to reconcile us to the fierceneſs of Electra. We cannot, (ſay theſe gentlemen) hear without horror a ſiſter exhorting her brother to murther her own mother; nature ſtarts at ſuch inhumanity: Oreſtes ſhould be revenged, but by ſome other hand. Theſe, and many other accuſations of the ſame kind, are brought againſt Sophocles, who ſtands indicted of cruelty by the French critics: their delicacy is, it ſeems, greatly ſhock'd at what they call the atrocity of the action.

CLYTÆMNESTRA.

Ah me! again!

ELECTRA.

O! that Ægiſthus too
Groan'd with thee now.

CHORUS.

Then vengeance is compleat.
The dead ariſe and ſhed their murth'rers blood
In copious ſtreams.

## SCENE II.

ORESTES, PYLADES, GOVERNOR of ORESTES, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

ELECTRA.

Behold them here; their hands
Dropping with gore; a pious ſacrifice
To the great god of war. How is't Oreſtes?

ORESTES.

Tis very well; all's well, if there be truth

In

action. I am notwithſtanding, of opinion, that the more indulgent Engliſh reader will acquit the poet, when he conſiders the manners and character of the people before whom the play was repreſented. The murther of Clytæmneſtra, we are frequently put in mind, was by command of the oracle; and was therefore look'd on by the antients, however contrary to the dictates of nature, as an act of piety. Their idea of fatality was, of itſelf, ſufficient to take away all the horror and cruelty of it; beſides which, it may be added in favour of Sophocles, that the ſtory of Clytæmneſtra, the perſons concern'd in her death, and every circumſtance attending it, was too well known to the whole audience to admit of any material alteration in the conduct of it.

In great Apollo's oracles, ſhe's dead.
Thou need'ſt not fear a cruel mother now.

CHORUS.

No more; Ægiſthus comes.

ELECTRA.

Inſtant go in;
Do ye not ſee him? joyful he returns.

CHORUS.

Retire; thus far is right, go on, and proſper.

ORESTES.

Fear not, we'll do it.

CHORUS.

But immediately.

ORESTES.

I'm gone. [Exeunt Oreſtes, Pylades and Gov.]

ELECTRA.

For what remains here to be done,
Be it my care; I'll whiſper in his ear
A few ſoft flatt'ring words, that he may ruſh
Unknowing down precipitate on ruin.

SCENE III.

ÆGISTHUS, ELECTRA, CHORUS.

ÆGISTHUS.

Which of you knows ought of theſe Phocian gueſts,
Who

*Which of you knows, &c.* Clytæmneſtra, we are to ſuppoſe, on receiving the news of Oreſtes's death, had ſent a meſſage to Ægiſthus to acquaint him with it; he returns home therefore immediately to enquire into the particulars.

Who come to tell us of Oreſtes' death?
You firſt I aſk, Electra, once ſo proud
And fierce of ſoul; it doth concern you moſt;
And therefore you, I think, can beſt inform me.

ELECTRA.

Yes I can tell thee; is it poſſible
I ſhou'd not know it? that were not to know
A circumſtance of deareſt import to me.

ÆGISTHUS.

Where are they then?

ELECTRA.

Within.

ÆGISTHUS.

And ſpake they truth?

ELECTRA.

They did; a truth not prov'd by words alone,
But facts undoubted.

ÆGISTHUS.

Shall we ſee him then?

ELECTRA.

Ay, and a dreadful ſight it is to ſee.

ÆGISTHUS.

Thou art not wont to give me ſo much joy;
Now I am glad indeed.

ELECTRA.

Glad may'ſt thou be,
If aught there is in that can give thee joy.

ÆGISTHUS.

Silence within, and let my palace gates
Be open'd all; that Argos and Mycenæ
May ſend her millions forth to view the ſight;
And if there are who nouriſh idle hopes
That ſtill Oreſtes lives, behold him here,
And learn ſubmiſſion, nor inflame the croud
Againſt their lawful ſov'reign, leſt they feel
An angry monarch's heavieſt vengeance on them.

ELECTRA.

Already I have learn'd the taſk, and yield
To pow'r ſuperior.

SCENE IV.

Opens and diſcovers the body of CLYTÆMNESTRA extended on a bier, and cover'd with a veil.

ORESTES, PYLADES, GOVERNOR of ORESTES, ÆGISTHUS, ELECTRA, CHORUS, and a croud of SPECTATORS from the city.

ÆGISTHUS.

What a ſight is here!

O!

*Glad may'ſt thou be.* This ſpeech of Electra, as well as that which goes before it, is purpoſely ambiguous; Ægiſthus believes ſhe is talking of Oreſtes, whilſt ſhe ſpeaks of Clytæmneſtra.

O! deity ſupreme! this cou'd not be
But by thy will; and whether Nemeſis
Shall ſtill o'ertake me for my crime, I know not.
Take off the veil, that I may view him well;
He was by blood ally'd, and therefore claims
Our decent ſorrows.

ORESTES.

Take it off thyſelf;
Tis not my office; thee it beſt befits
To ſee and to lament.

ÆGISTHUS.

And ſo it does;
And I will do't: ſend Clytæmneſtra hither. [taking off the veil.

ORESTES.

She is before thee.

ÆGISTHUS.

*This cou'd not be.* The greek is ϗ πεπτωκος, which, literally tranſlated, anſwers exactly to our phraſe, "it did not *fall out.*"

*Tis not my office.* All duties paid to the dead were perform'd by the neareſt relations; Oreſtes, as ſuppoſed to be a ſtranger, had no buſineſs with them; Ægiſthus therefore, himſelf, takes off the veil, which greatly heightens the ſurprize and horror of the cataſtrophe.

*She is before thee.* Of all the cataſtrophes, antient or modern, which I remember to have met with, this of Electra appears to me infinitely the moſt intereſting, natural, and truly dramatic. There cannot poſſibly be a ſpectacle more affecting than the ſcene before us; a tyrant, murtherer and adulterer, is repreſented as exulting on the death of the only perſon in the world whom he

ÆGISTHUS.

Ha! what do I ſee?

ORESTES.

Why, what's the matter? what affrights thee ſo?
Do you not ſee him?

ÆGISTHUS.

In what dreadful ſnare
Am I then fall'n?

ORESTES.

Doſt thou not now behold
That thou art talking with the dead?

ÆGISTHUS.

Alas!
Too well I ſee it, and thou art—Oreſtes.



he had to fear, and whoſe dead body he expects to ſee before him; inſtead of this, on lifting up the veil, he is ſhock'd, not with the corps of Oreſtes, but that of his own wife; he perceives at once that Clytæmneſtra is murther'd, that Oreſtes is alive and cloſe to him, and that he has nothing to expect himſelf but immediate death: the ſudden change of fortune to all the perſons concern'd, the ſurpriſe and deſpair of Ægiſthus, the joy and triumph in the countenances of Oreſtes and Electra, muſt altogether have exhibited a picture worthy the pencil of a Raphael to execute: how it was acted on the Greek ſtage, we cannot pretend to determine, moſt probably with taſte and judgment. Let the Engliſh reader conceive thoſe inimitable actors, Quin, Garrick, and Cibber in the parts of Ægiſthus, Oreſtes, and Electra, and from thence form to himſelf ſome idea of the effect which ſuch a cataſtrophe would have on a Britiſh audience.

ORESTES.

So great a prophet thou, and gueſs ſo ill!

ÆGISTHUS.

I know that I am loſt, undone for ever;
But let me ſpeak to thee.

ELECTRA.

Do not, Oreſtes;
No, not a word; what can a moment's ſpace
Profit a wretch like him to death devoted?
Quick let him dye, and caſt his carcaſe forth
To th' dogs and vultures; they will beſt perform
Fit obſequies for him: by this alone
We can be free and happy.

ORESTES.

Get thee in;
This is no time for talk; thy life, thy life.

ÆGISTHUS.

*So great a prophet &c.* This is a ſneer of Oreſtes, on his being diſcover'd by Ægiſthus, who had the reputation of a prophet.

*They will beſt perform &c.* Amongſt the Greeks, to be deprived of the rites of ſepulture was accounted a puniſhment worſe than death itſelf. The original doth not mention dogs and vultures, but only ſays, let him be given ταφευσι, ſolis pollinctoribus vel libitinariis, to the only buriers (if we may uſe the expreſſion) that he deſerves.

ÆGISTHUS.

But why go in? if what thou mean'ſt to do
Be juſt, what need of darkneſs to conceal it?
Why not deſtroy me here?

ORESTES.

It is not thine
Now to command: hence to the fatal place
Where our dear father fell, and periſh there.

ÆGISTHUS.

This palace then is doom'd to be the witneſs
Of all the preſent, all the future woes
Of Pelops' hapleſs race.

ORESTES.

Of thine, at leaſt



*Hence to the fatal place &c.* Ægiſthus muſt be ſlain in the very ſpot where he kill'd Agamemnon; this heightens the juſtice of the action, and at the ſame time prevents the ſpilling of blood on the ſtage, which Sophocles judiciouſly avoids. The juſtice of Oreſtes puts us in mind of a ſimilar paſſage in holy writ, "in the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, ſhall dogs "lick thy blood, even thine."

See 1 Kings, 21, 19.

*Of thine at leaſt &c.* The antients were of opinion, that the words of dying men were always prophetic; Ægiſthus therefore perceiving that his death was determined, foretells the fate of Oreſtes, doom'd to be tormented for the murther of his mother; Oreſtes interrupts his ſpeech, by aſſuring him that his own fate was unavoidable: the Engliſh reader will recollect a parallel

It ſhall be witneſs; that's my prophecy,
And a moſt true one.

ÆGISTHUS.

'Tis not from thy father.

ORESTES.

Thou talk'ſt, and time is loſt. Away.

ÆGISTHUS.

I follow.

ORESTES.

Thou ſhalt go firſt.

ÆGISTHUS.

Think'ſt thou I mean to fly?

ORESTES.

No; but I'd make thy end moſt bitter to thee
In ev'ry circumſtance, nor let thee chooſe
The ſofteſt means. Were all like thee to periſh
Who violate the laws, 'twou'd leſſen much
The guilt of mortals, and reform mankind.

[Exeunt.

CHORUS.

rallel paſſage in Shakeſpear, where Richard the third cuts off the prophecies of Henry the ſixth, with

——Die, prophet, in thy ſpeech;
For this among the reſt was I ordain'd.

CHORUS.

O! race of Atreus! after all thy woes,
How art thou thus by one advent'rous deed
To freedom and to happineſs reſtor'd!

FINIS.

# PHILOCTETES.

# Dramatis Perſonæ.

ULYSSES, king of Ithaca.

NEOPTOLEMUS, ſon of Achilles.

PHILOCTETES, ſon of Pæan and companion of Hercules.

A SPY.

HERCULES.

CHORUS

Compoſed of the companions of ULYSSES and NEOPTOLEMUS.

SCENE Lemnos, near a grotto, in a rock by the ſea-ſide.

# PHILOCTETES.

## ACT I.

### SCENE I.

ULYSSES, NEOPTOLEMUS, ATTENDANT.

ULYSSES.

AT length, my noble friend, thou braveſt ſon
Of a brave father, father of us all,
The great Achilles, we have reach'd the ſhore
Of ſea-girt Lemnos, deſart and forlorn,
Where never tread of human ſtep is ſeen,
Or voice of mortal heard, ſave his alone,
Poor Philoctetes, Pæan's wretched ſon,



*Poor Philoctetes, &c.* It is reported of Philoctetes, that Hercules, at his death on mount Hyllus, bequeath'd to him, as a teſtimony of his eſteem, his bow and arrows; the extraordinary virtues of which we ſhall find frequently alluded to in this piece. Philoctetes after this, being in ſearch of an altar dedicated to his deceaſed friend, in the iſland of Chryſa, was there bit by a ſerpent; the wound feſter'd, and an incurable ulcer enſued, notwithſtanding which he proceeded in

Whom here I left; for ſuch were my commands
From Grecia's chiefs, when by his fatal wound
Oppreſs'd, his groans and execrations dreadful
Alarm'd our hoſts, our ſacred rites profan'd,
And interrupted holy ſacrifice.
But why ſhou'd I repeat the tale? the time
Admits not of delay, we muſt not linger,
Leſt he diſcover our arrival here,
And all our purpos'd fraud to draw him hence
Be ineffectual; lend me then thy aid:

Surveying

in his voyage to aſſiſt at the ſiege of Troy; where the wound growing deſperate, his continual cries and groans interrupted the motions of the war, and probably diſhearten'd the ſoldiers; the Grecian chiefs therefore thought it adviſeable to remove him from the army. A ſuperſtitious belief was inſtill'd into the multitude, that Philoctetes was ſtruck by the hand of the gods with an incurable diſtemper; and Ulyſſes was order'd to carry him to Lemnos, an uninhabited iſland in the Ægean ſea, and leave him there to the care of providence. In this miſerable ſituation he remain'd for ten years; the Greeks in the mean time are inform'd by an oracle, that Troy could never be conquer'd without the arrows of Hercules, then in the poſſeſſion of Philoctetes. Ulyſſes and Neoptolemus are diſpatch'd with commands to bring him to the ſiege. The manner in which this expedition was conducted, and the means made uſe of by the artful Ulyſſes to gain the arrows of Hercules, conſtitute the ſubject of the tragedy; which though extremely barren of dramatic incidents, and diveſted of every theatrical ornament, abounds at the ſame time in ſuch amiable ſimplicity, ſuch ſtrength of colouring, and propriety of character and manners, as may, perhaps, render it even more pleaſing to the judicious and claſſical reader than thoſe plays of Sophocles where the fable is apparently more intereſting, and the manners much more ſimilar to our own. The celebrated archbiſhop of Cambray was ſo ſtruck with the ſtory of Philoctetes, that he has taken the pains to weave it into his excellent work, where it forms a very beautiful epiſode.

See Telemaque, b. 15.

Surveying round thee, canſt thou ſee a rock
With double entrance; to the ſun's warm rays
In winter open, and in ſummer's heat
Giving free paſſage to the welcome breeze?
A little to the left, there is a fountain
Of living water, where, if yet he breathes,
He ſlakes his thirſt; if aught thou ſeeſt of this,
Inform me; ſo ſhall each to each impart
Council moſt fit, and ſerve our common cauſe.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

[leaving Ulyſſes a little behind him.

If I miſtake not, I behold a cave,
Ev'n ſuch as thou deſcrib'ſt.

ULYSSES.

Doſt thou? which way?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Yonder it is; but no path leading thither,
Or trace of human footſtep.

ULYSSES.

In his cell
A chance but he hath lain him down to reſt;
Look if he hath not.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

[advancing towards the cave.

Not a creature there.

ULYSSES.

Nor food, nor mark of houſhold preparation?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

A ruſtic bed of ſcatter'd leaves.

ULYSSES.

What more?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

A wooden bowl, the work of ſome rude hand,
With a few ſticks for fuel.

ULYSSES.

This is all
His little treaſure here.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Unhappy man!
Some linen for his wounds.

ULYSSES.

This muſt be then
His place of habitation; far from hence
He cannot roam; diſtemper'd as he is,
It were impoſſible; he is but gone
A little way for needful food, or herb
Of pow'r to 'ſwage and mitigate his pain.
Wherefore diſpatch this ſervant to ſome place
Of obſervation, whence he may eſpy

His

His ev'ry motion, leſt he ruſh upon us.
There's not a Grecian whom his ſoul ſo much
Cou'd wiſh to cruſh beneath him as Ulyſſes.

[Makes a ſignal to the attendant, who retires.

## SCENE II.

NEOPTOLEMUS, ULYSSES.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

He's gone to guard each avenue; and now,
If thou haſt aught of moment to impart
Touching our purpoſe, ſay it; I attend.

ULYSSES.

Son of Achilles, mark me well; remember
What we are doing, not on ſtrength alone,
Or courage, but on conduct will depend;
Therefore if aught uncommon be propos'd,
Strange to thy ears, and adverſe to thy nature,
Reflect that 'tis thy duty to comply,
And act conjunctive with me.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Well! what is it?

ULYSSES.

We muſt deceive this Philoctetes; that
Will be thy taſk; when he ſhall aſk thee who
And what thou art, Achilles' ſon, reply;

Thus

Thus far within the verge of truth, no more;
Add, that reſentment fir'd thee to forſake
The Grecian fleet, and ſeek thy native ſoil,
Unkindly us'd by thoſe who long with vows
Had ſought thy aid to humble haughty Troy,
And when thou cam'ſt, ungrateful as they were,
The arms of great Achilles, thy juſt right,
Gave to Ulyſſes; here thy bitter taunts
And ſharp invectives lib'rally beſtow
On me; ſay what thou wilt, I ſhall forgive,
And Greece will not forgive thee if thou doſt not;
For againſt Troy thy efforts all are vain
Without his arrows: ſafely thou may'ſt hold
Friendſhip and converſe with him, but I cannot.
Thou wert not with us when the war began,
Nor bound by ſolemn oath to join our hoſt
As I was; me he knows, and if he find
That I am with thee, we are both undone.
They muſt be ours then, theſe all-conquering arms;

Remember

*The arms of great Achilles.* The conteſt concerning the arms of Achilles was ſolely between Ajax and Ulyſſes; we have no account that Neoptolemus laid any claim to them. As Philoctetes however had been abſent during the whole affair, Ulyſſes was at liberty to ſubſtitute Neoptolemus in the room of Ajax, eſpecially as his being the ſon of Achilles naturally juſtified his pretenſions to the arms of his father; the fiction therefore was probable.

*Theſe all-conqu'ring arms.* A diſpute concerning a bow and arrows may probably ſeem to a modern critic but an unpromiſing ſubject for a tragedy; but the

Remember that. I know, thy noble nature
Abhors the thought of treachery or fraud;
But what a glorious prize is victory!
Therefore be bold; we will be juſt hereafter.
Give to deceit and me a little portion
Of one ſhort day, and for thy future life
Be call'd the holieſt, worthieſt, beſt of men.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

What but to hear alarms my conſcious ſoul,
Son of Laertes, I ſhall never practiſe.
I was not born to flatter or betray;
Nor I, nor he (the voice of fame reports)
Who gave me birth; what open arms can do
Behold me prompt to act, but ne'er to fraud
Will I deſcend; ſure we can more than match

In

the defenders of Sophocles muſt deſire him to recollect, that on thoſe arrows, however unintereſting the circumſtance may at firſt appear, depended no leſs than the fate of a whole nation; politically conſider'd therefore, it was a point of the utmoſt conſequence; if the poet had not thought ſo, he would certainly have been inexcuſable in bringing down a deity at laſt, as we ſhall ſee in the cataſtrophe, to determine it.

*We will be juſt hereafter.* This advice is put with great propriety into the mouth of the artful Ulyſſes, who, like other ſubtle pandars to vice, perſuades his friend to the commiſſion of a crime, and at the ſame time propoſes the palliative of future repentance and virtue. An evaſive and ſubtle excuſe for guilt, which has perhaps done more injury to the cauſe of religion and truth than any other whatever. Neoptolemus anſwers it with all the honeſt indignation that ſuch a ſentiment deſerved. The characters, we may obſerve of the two heroes, are finely contraſted, and ſerve like light and ſhade, greatly to animate and enliven the whole beautiful picture.

In ſtrength a foe thus lame and impotent.
I came to be a helpmate to thee, not
A baſe betrayer; and O! king, believe me,
Rather, much rather would I fall by virtue,
Than riſe by guilt to certain victory.

ULYSSES.

O! noble youth, and worthy of thy ſire,
When I like thee was young, like thee of ſtrength
And courage boaſtful, little did I deem
Of human policy; but long experience
Hath taught me, ſon, 'tis not the pow'rful arm
But ſoft enchanting tongue that governs all.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

And thou woud'ſt have me tell an odious falſehood?

ULYSSES.

He muſt be gain'd by fraud.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

By fraud? and why
Not by perſuaſion?

ULYSSES.

He'll not liſten to it;
And force were vainer ſtill.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

What mighty pow'r
Hath he to boaſt?

ULYSSES.

ULYSSES.

His arrows wing'd with death
Inevitable.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Then it were not ſafe
Ev'n to approach him.

ULYSSES.

No; unleſs by fraud
He be ſecur'd.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

And think'ſt thou 'tis not baſe
To tell a lye then?

ULYSSES.

Not if on that lye
Depends our ſafety.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Who ſhall dare to tell it



*Think'ſt thou 'tis not baſe &c.* The character of Neoptolemus is copied from that of his father, who is repreſented by Homer as of an open and ingenuous diſpoſition, and a foe to lying and diſſimulation; in the ninth book of the Iliad, he crys out,

Εχθρος γαρ μοι κεινος ομως αϊδαο πυλησιν,
Ος δ' ἑτερον μεν κευθει ενι φρεσιν, αλλο δε βαζει.

Who dares think one thing, and another tell,
My heart deteſts him as the gates of hell. POPE.

words that deſerve, though from a heathen writer, to be written in letters of gold, and graven, as Solomon ſays, in the tablets of the heart.

Without a bluſh?

ULYSSES.

We need not bluſh at aught
That may promote our int'reſt and ſucceſs.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

But where's the int'reſt that ſhou'd biaſs me?
Come he or not to Troy, imports it aught
To Neoptolemus?

ULYSSES.

Troy cannot fall
Without his arrows.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Said'ſt thou not, that I
Was deſtin'd to deſtroy her?

ULYSSES.

Without them
Nought canſt thou do, and they without thee nothing.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Then I muſt have them.

ULYSSES.

When thou haſt, remember



*Then I muſt have them.* The ſtruggle between ambition and virtue in the breaſt of Neoptolemus, is natural and affecting. The ſubtle Ulyſſes had diſcover'd that his foible was the love of glory, and therefore attacks him in the only part where he was open to perſuaſion. The virtue of Neoptolemus ſtaggers at the reward propoſed, and he ſubmits to a treachery which his ſoul abhors.

A double prize awaits thee.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

What, Ulyſſes?

ULYSSES.

The glorious names of valiant and of wiſe.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Away; I'll do it. Thoughts of guilt or ſhame
No more appall me.

ULYSSES.

Wilt thou do it then?
Wilt thou remember what I told thee of?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Depend on't; I have promis'd; that's ſufficient.

ULYSSES.

Here then remain thou; I muſt not be ſeen;
If thou ſtay long, I'll ſend a faithful ſpy
Who in a ſailor's habit well diſguis'd
May paſs unknown; of him, from time to time,
What beſt may ſuit our purpoſe thou ſhalt know.
I'll to the ſhip; farewel; and may the god
Who brought us here, the fraudful Mercury,
And great Minerva, guardian of our country,
And ever kind to me, protect us ſtill. [Exeunt.



*The fraudful Mercury.* See note in Electra, p. 184.

## SCENE III.

### CHORUS, NEOPTOLEMUS.

CHORUS.

Maſter, inſtruct us, ſtrangers as we are,
What we may utter, what we muſt conceal.
Doubtleſs the man we ſeek will entertain
Suſpicion of us; how are we to act?
To thoſe alone belongs the art to rule,
Who bear the ſcepter from the hand of Jove;
To thee of right devolves the pow'r ſupreme,
From thy great anceſtors deliver'd down;
Speak then, our royal lord, and we obey.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

If you wou'd penetrate yon deep receſs
To ſee the cave where Philoctetes lyes,

Go

*Maſter, inſtruct us &c.* According to the original deſign of the chorus, their chief buſineſs was to take the part of diſtreſs'd virtue; to counter-act the bad effects that might ariſe from vitious characters, and to draw moral inferences from the action of the drama: they are generally therefore, as in the two preceding plays of Ajax and Electra, attendants on, and friends to the hero or heroine of the piece; a propriety which the ſubject of the tragedy before us would by no means admit, the diſtreſs of Philoctetes ariſing in a great meaſure from his being left alone in the iſland; the chorus, for this reaſon, is compoſed not of the friends of the hero, but the ſoldiers and followers of Ulyſſes and Neoptolemus; we muſt not be ſurpriſed therefore to find them conſpiring with their maſters to deceive Philoctetes, and throughout the play aiding and aſſiſting the deſigns of their commanders; they, notwithſtanding, perform the officium virile preſcribed by Horace, and expreſs their pity and concern for the man, whom it is not in their power to relieve.

Go forward; but remember to return
When the poor wand'rer comes this way, prepar'd
To aid our purpoſe here, if need require.

CHORUS.

O! king, we ever meant to fix our eyes
On thee, and wait attentive to thy will;
But, tell us, in what part is he conceal'd?
'Tis fit we know the place, leſt unobſerv'd
He ruſh upon us; which way doth it lye?
See'ſt thou his footſteps leading from the cave,
Or hither bent?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

[advancing towards the cave.

Behold the double door
Of his poor dwelling, and the flinty bed.

CHORUS.

And whither is its wretched maſter gone?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Doubtleſs in ſearch of food, and not far off;
For ſuch his manner is; accuſtom'd here,
So fame reports, to pierce with winged arrows
His ſavage prey for daily ſuſtenance,
His wound ſtill painful, and no hope of cure.

CHORUS.

CHORUS.

Alas! I pity him; without a friend,
Without a fellow-ſuff'rer, left alone,
Depriv'd of all the mutual joys that flow
From ſweet ſociety, diſtemper'd too;
How can he bear it? O! unhappy race
Of mortal man! doom'd to an endleſs round
Of ſorrows, and immeaſurable woe!
Second to none in fair nobility
Was Philoctetes, of illuſtrious race;
Yet here he lyes, from ev'ry human aid
Far off remov'd in dreadful ſolitude,
And mingles with the wild and ſavage herd;
With them in famine and in miſery
Conſumes his days, and weeps their common fate
Unheeded, ſave when babbling echo mourns
In bitt'reſt notes reſponſive to his woe.

NEOP-

*Alas! I pity him, &c.* The lamentation of the chorus in this ſcene, as it ſtands in the original, is in Strophe and Antiſtrophe, and was therefore moſt probably, as I have before obſerved, ſet to muſic and ſung; but as it makes at the ſame time part of their converſation with Neoptolemus, I could not throw it into ode or rhyme without interrupting the narration, and giving a motley appearance to the dialogue; I have therefore left it in blank verſe. The deſcription of Philoctetes's diſtreſs, in this paſſage, is in the Greek inimitably beautiful, which I have endeavour'd to give my readers ſome imperfect idea of in the tranſlation.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

And yet I wonder not; for if aright
I judge, from angry heav'n the ſentence came;
And Chryſa was the cruel ſource of all;
Nor doth this ſad diſeaſe inflict him ſtill
Incurable, without aſſenting gods;
For ſo they have decreed, leſt Troy ſhou'd fall
Beneath his arrows e'er th' appointed time
Of it's deſtruction come.

CHORUS.

No more, my ſon;

NEOPTOLEMUS.

What ſayſt thou?

CHORUS.

Sure I heard a diſmal groan
Of ſome afflicted wretch.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Which way?

CHORUS.

*From angry heav'n, &c.* The ſtory of Philoctetes, as related in the fifteenth book of Telemaque, differs from that of Sophocles in this particular; Philoctetes there informs Telemachus that he drop'd by chance one of the arrows of Hercules on his own foot, and that the wound remain'd for a long time incurable. He likewiſe attributes this misfortune and all the diſtreſs, which he ſuffer'd at Lemnos, to his crime in diſcovering to Ulyſſes the place where Hercules died, and which he had ſolemnly ſworn to conceal. The gods therefore puniſh'd him for his perjury.

CHORUS.

ev'n now
I hear it, and the ſound as of ſome ſtep
Slow-moving this way, he is not far from us;
His plaints are louder now; prepare, my ſon.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

For what?

CHORUS.

New troubles; for behold he comes;
Not like the ſhepherd with his rural pipe
And chearful ſong, but groaning heavily;
Either his wounded foot againſt ſome thorn
Hath ſtruck, and pains him ſorely, or perchance
He hath eſpied from far ſome ſhip attempting
To enter this inhoſpitable port,
And hence his cries to ſave it from deſtruction.

[Exeunt.

*Not like the ſhepherd, &c.* Otway has caught this image in his Orphan.

" Sweet as the ſhepherd's pipe upon the mountain."

End of ACT I.

ACT II.

# ACT II.

## SCENE I.

PHILOCTETES, NEOPTOLEMUS, CHORUS.

PHILOCTETES.

SAY, welcome ſtrangers, what diſaſtrous fate
Led you to this inhoſpitable ſhore,
Nor haven ſafe, nor habitation fit
Affording ever? of what clime, what race?
Who are ye? ſpeak; if I may truſt that garb
Familiar once to me, ye are of Greece,
My much-lov'd country; let me hear the ſound
Of your long-wiſh'd for voices; do not look
With horror on me, but in kind compaſſion
Pity a wretch deſerted and forlorn



*Say, welcome ſtrangers, &c.* The abſurdity of dividing the Greek tragedies into five acts, which is perpetually recurring to us, appears remarkably evident in this place. Brumoy was obliged to make this the beginning of the ſecond act, though it is apparent the ſtage is not empty. Philoctetes enters to Neoptolemus and the Chorus whilſt they are talking of him. There was, however, no other method of dividing the play without making the firſt act three times as long as any of the reſt; I have therefore follow'd this diviſion merely for a pauſe to the Engliſh reader.

*Do not look, &c.* Philoctetes, we may naturally imagine, after ten years ſtay on an uninhabited iſland, made but an uncouth and ſavage appearance; this addreſs to the chorus therefore, who are ſhock'd at his figure, is extremely natural, as is indeed almoſt every thing which Sophocles puts into the mouths of every character in the drama.

In this ſad place; O! if ye come as friends,
Speak then, and anſwer, hold ſome converſe with me,
For this at leaſt from man to man is due.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Know, ſtranger, firſt what moſt thou ſeem'ſt to wiſh;
We are of Greece.

PHILOCTETES.

O! happineſs to hear!
After ſo many years of dreadful ſilence,
How welcome was that ſound! O! tell me, ſon,
What chance, what purpoſe, who conducted thee?
What brought thee hither, what propitious gale?
Who art thou? tell me all; inform me quickly.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Native of Scyros, thither I return;
My name is Neoptolemus, the ſon
Of brave Achilles. I have told thee all.

PHILOCTETES.

Dear is thy country, and thy father dear
To me, thou darling of old Lycomede;
But tell me in what fleet, and whence thou cam'ſt.

NEOP-

*Native of Scyros, &c.* Scyros was an iſland in the Ægean ſea, of which Lycomedes was king; hither Achilles was brought in woman's apparel to avoid the Trojan war, and falling in love with Deidamia, the king's daughther, had by her Pyrrhus, otherwiſe call'd Neoptolemus. This explains what follows, where Philoctetes calls him the "darling of old Lycomede."

NEOPTOLEMUS.

From Troy.

PHILOCTETES.

From Troy? I think thou wert not with us,
When firſt our fleet ſail'd forth.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Wert thou then there?
Or know'ſt thou aught of that great enterprize?

PHILOCTETES.

Know you not then the man whom you behold?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

How ſhou'd I know whom I had never ſeen?

PHILOCTETES.

Have you ne'er heard of me, nor of my name?
Hath my ſad ſtory never reach'd your ear?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Never.

PHILOCTETES.

Alas! how hateful to the gods,
How very poor a wretch muſt I be then,
That Greece ſhou'd never hear of woes like mine!
But they who ſent me hither, they conceal'd them,
And ſmile triumphant, whilſt my cruel wounds
Grow deeper ſtill. O! ſprung from great Achilles,

Behold before thee Pæan's wretched ſon,
With whom, a chance but thou haſt heard, remain
The dreadful arrows of renown'd Alcides,
Ev'n the unhappy Philoctetes, him
Whom the Atridæ and the vile Ulyſſes
Inhuman left, diſtemper'd as I was
By the envenom'd ſerpent's deep-felt wound;
Soon as they ſaw that, with long toil oppreſs'd,
Sleep had o'erta'en me on the hollow rock,
There did they leave me when from Chryſa's ſhore
They bent their fatal courſe; a little food
And theſe few rags were all they wou'd beſtow;
Such one day be their fate! Alas! my ſon,
How dreadful, think'ſt thou, was that waking to me,
When from my ſleep I roſe and ſaw them not!
How did I weep! and mourn my wretched ſtate!

When

*How did I weep, &c.* The character of Meliſander in the Agamemnon of Thompſon, is a cloſe imitation of the Philoctetes. Our excellent deſcriptive poet has there transfuſed the ſpirit of Sophocles, and painted the miſeries of ſolitude in the warmeſt colours. Thompſon even improves on the paſſage before us in the following lines, which are ſo beautiful that I cannot help tranſcribing them.

Caſt on the wildeſt of the Cyclad iſles,
Where never human foot had mark'd the ſhore,
Theſe ruffians left me——yet, believe me, Arcas,
Such is the rooted love we bear mankind,
All ruffians as they were, I never heard
A ſound ſo diſmal as their parting oars. See Thomp. Agam. act 3.

The ſentiment in the two laſt lines is remarkably natural and pathetic; but I refer my readers to the play itſelf, which abounds in many fine imitations of the antient tragedy,

When not a ſhip remain'd of all the fleet
That brought me here; no kind companion left
To miniſter or needful food or balm
To my ſad wounds: on ev'ry ſide I look'd,
And nothing ſaw but woe; of that indeed
Meaſure too full: for day ſucceeded day,
And ſtill no comfort came; myſelf alone
Cou'd to myſelf the means of life afford,
In this poor grotto; on my bow I liv'd:
The winged dove, which my ſharp arrow ſlew,
With pain I brought into my little hut,
And feaſted there; then from the broken ice
I ſlak'd my thirſt, or crept into the wood
For uſeful fuel; from the ſtricken flint
I drew the latent ſpark, that warms me ſtill,
And ſtill revives, this with my humble roof
Preſerve me, ſon; but O! my wounds remain!
Thou ſee'ſt an iſland deſolate and waſte;
No friendly port, nor hopes of gain to tempt,

Nor

*The winged dove, &c.*

Herbs were my food, thoſe bleſſed ſtores of health;
Only, when winter from my daily ſearch
Withdrew my verdant meal, I was oblig'd
In faithleſs ſnares to ſeize, which truly griev'd me,
My ſylvan friends, that ne'er till then had known,
And therefore dreaded leſs, the tyrant man.

See Thompſon's Agamemnon.

Nor hoſt to welcome in the traveller;
Few ſeek the wild inhoſpitable ſhore.
By adverſe winds, ſometimes th' unwilling gueſts,
As well thou mayſt ſuppoſe, were hither driv'n;
But when they came, they only pity'd me,
Gave me a little food, or better garb
To ſhield me from the cold; in vain I pray'd
That they wou'd bear me to my native ſoil,
For none wou'd liſten: here for ten long years
Have I remain'd, whilſt miſery and famine
Keep freſh my wounds, and double my misfortune.
This have th' Atridæ and Ulyſſes done,
And may the gods with equal woes repay them!

CHORUS.

O! ſon of Pæan, well might thoſe, who came
And ſaw thee thus, in kind compaſſion weep;
I too muſt pity thee; I can no more.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I can bear witneſs to thee, for I know
By ſad experience what th' Atridæ are,
And what, Ulyſſes,

PHILOCTETES.

Haſt thou ſuffer'd then?
And doſt thou hate them too?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

O! that theſe hands
Cou'd vindicate my wrongs! Mycenæ then
And Sparta ſhou'd confeſs that Scyros boaſts
Of ſons as brave and valiant as their own.

PHILOCTETES.

O! noble youth! but wherefore cam'ſt thou hither?
Whence this reſentment?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I will tell thee all,
If I can bear to tell it: know then, ſoon
As great Achilles dy'd——

PHILOCTETES.

——O! ſtay, my ſon,
Is then Achilles dead?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

He is, and not
By mortal hand, but by Apollo's ſhaft
Fell glorious.

PHILOC-

*Mycenæ then and Sparta, &c.* Two cities of Peloponneſus. Neoptolemus here threatens Agamemnon and Menelaus, the former of whom was king of Mycenæ, and the latter of Sparta.

*By Apollo's ſhaft.* Homer, and after him Virgil, makes Phœbus aſſiſt Paris in the death of Achilles, by wounding him with an arrow in the heel, the only part of him that was vulnerable.

PHILOCTETES.

O! moſt worthy of each other,
The ſlayer and the ſlain! permit me, ſon,
To mourn his fate, e'er I attend to thine. [he weeps.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Alas! thou need'ſt not weep for other's woes,
Thou haſt enough already of thy own.

PHILOCTETES.

'Tis very true; and therefore to thy tale.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Thus then it was. Soon as Achilles dy'd,
Phœnix, the guardian of his tender years,
Inſtant ſail'd forth, and ſought me out at Sçyros;
With him the wary chief Ulyſſes came;
They told me then (or true or falſe I know not)
My father dead, by me, and me alone
Proud Troy muſt fall; I yielded to their pray'rs;
I hop'd to ſee at leaſt the dear remains
Of him, whom living I had long in vain
Wiſh'd to behold; ſafe at Sigeum's port
Soon we arrived; in crouds the num'rous hoſt
Throng'd to embrace me, call'd the gods to witneſs
In me once more they ſaw their lov'd Achilles

To

*Phœnix, &c.* See Homer, book 9.

To life reſtor'd; but he alas! was gone.
I ſhed the duteous tear, then ſought my friends
Th' Atridæ, (friends I thought 'em) claim'd the arms
Of my dead father, and what elſe remain'd
His late poſſeſſion, when, O! cruel words!
And wretched I to hear them! thus they anſwer'd;
" Son of Achilles, thou in vain demand'ſt
" Thoſe arms already to Ulyſſes giv'n;
" The reſt be thine;" I wept; and is it thus,
Indignant I reply'd, ye dare to give
My right away? Know, boy, Ulyſſes cry'd,
That right was mine, and therefore they beſtow'd
The boon on me, me who preſerv'd the arms
And him who bore them too. With anger fir'd
At this proud ſpeech, I threaten'd all that rage
Cou'd dictate to me, if he not return'd them.
Stung with my words, yet calm, he anſwer'd me;
Thou wert not with us; thou wert in a place,
Where thou ſhou'dſt not have been; and ſince thou mean'ſt
To brave me thus, know, thou ſhalt never bear



*And him who bore them.* Ulyſſes was reported to have taken away the dead body of Achilles from the Trojans, and carried it off the field of battle to the Grecian camp. Ovid mentions this in his account of the conteſt,

His humeris, his inquam humeris, ego corpus Achillis
Et ſimul arma tuli. Meta. book 15.

Thoſe arms with thee to Scyros; 'tis reſolv'd.
Thus injur'd, thus depriv'd of all I held
Moſt precious, by the worſt of men, I left
The hateful place, and ſeek my native ſoil;
Nor do I blame ſo much the proud Ulyſſes
As his baſe maſters: army, city, all
Depend on thoſe who rule: when men grow vile
The guilt is theirs who taught them to be wicked.
I've told thee all, and him who hates th' Atridæ
I hold a friend to me, and to the gods.

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

O earth! thou mother of great Jove,
Embracing all with univerſal love,
Author benign of ev'ry good,
Thro' whom Pactolus rolls his golden flood,
To thee, whom in thy rapid car
Fierce lions draw, I roſe and made my pray'r,

To

*O! earth, &c.* This is an occaſional ſong of the chorus, which is very ſhort, conſiſting only of a ſtrophe of thirteen lines in the original; we ſhall find the antiſtrophe at a conſiderable diſtance from it, breaking the dialogue in a manner very uncommon.

*Embracing all, &c.* The earth, under the various names of Cybele, Ops, Rhea and Veſta, call'd the mother of the gods, was worſhip'd in Phrygia and Lybia, where the river Pactolus is ſaid to have enrich'd Crœſus with its ſands. Cybele is repreſented by the poets as drawn by lions.

To thee I made my ſorrows known,
When from Achilles' injur'd ſon
Th' Atridæ gave the prize, that fatal day
When proud Ulyſſes bore his arms away.

PHILOCTETES.

I wonder not, my friend, to ſee you here,
And I believe the tale; for well I know
The men who wrong'd you, know the baſe Ulyſſes;
Falſehood and fraud dwell on his lips, and nought
That's juſt or good can be expected from him;
But ſtrange it is to me, that Ajax preſent
He dare attempt it.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Ajax is no more;
Had he been living, I had ne'er been ſpoil'd
Thus of my right,

PHILOCTETES.

Is he then dead?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

He is.

PHILOCTETES.

Alas! the ſon of Tydeus, and that ſlave,



*Son of Tydeus.* Diomede.

Sold by his father Siſyphus, they live,
Unworthy as they are.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Alas! they do,
And flouriſh ſtill.

PHILOCTETES.

My old and worthy friend
The Pylian ſage, how is he? he cou'd ſee
Their arts, and wou'd have giv'n them better counſels.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Weigh'd down with grief he lives, but, moſt unhappy,
Weeps his loſt ſon, his dear Antilochus.

PHILOCTETES.

O! double woe! whom I cou'd moſt have wiſh'd
To live and to be happy, thoſe to periſh!
Ulyſſes to ſurvive! it ſhou'd not be.

NEOP-

*Sold by his father, &c.* It was reported that Anticlea was taken away by Laertes after her marriage with Siſyphus, and when ſhe was with child of Ulyſſes, for which Siſyphus the firſt huſband received a ſum of money; Ulyſſes therefore was often reproach'd with being the ſon of Siſyphus.

See a note in Ajax, p. 15.

*The Pylian ſage.* Neſtor, king of Pylos. Agamemnon had ſuch an opinion of his wiſdom that Homer makes him ſay, if he had ten ſuch counſellors Troy would ſoon fall before him.

*Weeps his loſt ſon.* Antilochus was ſlain by Memnon in the Trojan war.

See Homer's Od. b. 4.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

O! 'tis a ſubtle foe; but deepeſt plans
May ſometimes fail.

PHILOCTETES.

Where was Patroclus then,
Thy father's deareſt friend?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

He too was dead.
In war, alas! ſo fate ordains it ever,
The coward 'ſcapes, the brave and virtuous fall.

PHILOCTETES.

It is too true; and now thou talk'ſt of cowards,
Where is that worthleſs wretch, of readieſt tongue,
Subtle and voluble?

NEOP-

. *O! 'tis a ſubtle foe.* The original is

Σοφος παλαισης κεινος. αλλα χαι σοφαι
Γνωμαι, Φιλοκτητ', εμποδιζονται θαλα.

which Brumoy tranſlates thus, 'Antiloque étoit brave, mais la valeur eſt ſou-'vent mal recompenſée, 'Antilochus was brave, but valour is often ill-rewarded.' The ſenſe of this paſſage, ſays he, is doubtful, but it certainly alludes to Antilochus. With all due deference to Mr. Brumoy's judgment, I cannot help thinking that he is here miſtaken. Philoctetes had juſt obſerved that Ulyſſes ſtill lived; and Neoptolemus immediately anſwers, 'O! he is a ſubtle foe,' Σοφος παλαισης, 'a cunning wreſtler.' Sophocles muſt certainly mean Ulyſſes, for how can Σοφος (according to Brumoy's tranſlation) ſignify brave, or Σοφαι γνωμαι be interpreted valour? Thomſon had apparently this very paſſage in his eye, when he makes Meliſander ſay,

"Malice often over-ſhoots itſelf."

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Ulyſſes?

PHILOCTETES.

No;

Therſites; ever talking, never heard.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I have not ſeen him, but I hear he lives.

PHILOCTETES.

I did not doubt it: evil never dyes;
The gods take care of that: if aught there be
Fraudful and vile, 'tis ſafe; the good and juſt
Periſh unpity'd by them; wherefore is it?
When gods do ill, why ſhou'd we worſhip them?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Since thus it is, ſince virtue is oppreſs'd,
And vice triumphant, who deſerve to live
Are doom'd to periſh, and the guilty reign;
Henceforth, O! ſon of Pæan, far from Troy
And the Atridæ will I live remote.



*Therſites.* For the character of Therſites, ſee Homer's illad, b. 2.

*Since thus it is &c.* Addiſon had probably this paſſage in view, when he makes his Cato ſay,

" When vice prevails, and impious men bear ſway,
" The poſt of honour is a private ſtation."

I wou'd not ſee the man I cannot love.
My barren Scyros ſhall afford me refuge,
And home-felt joys delight my future days.
So, fare thee well, and may th' indulgent gods
Heal thy ſad wound, and grant thee ev'ry wiſh
Thy ſoul can form; once more, farewel. I go,
The firſt propitious gale.

PHILOCTETES.

What! now, my ſon?
So ſoon?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Immediately; the time demands
We ſhou'd be near, and ready to depart.

PHILOCTETES.

Now, by the mem'ry of thy honour'd ſire,
By thy lov'd mother, by whate'er remains
On earth moſt dear to thee, O! hear me now,
Thy ſuppliant; do not, do not thus forſake me,
Alone, oppreſs'd, deſerted, as thou ſee'ſt,
In this ſad place; I ſhall, I know I muſt be
A burthen to thee, but, O! bear it kindly,
For ever doth the noble mind abhor
Th' ungen'rous deed, and loves humanity;
Diſgrace attends thee if thou doſt forſake me.

If not, immortal fame rewards thy goodneſs.
Thou mayſt convey me ſafe to OEta's ſhores
In one ſhort day; I'll trouble you no longer;
Hide me in any part where I may leaſt
Moleſt you. Hear me; by the guardian god
Of the poor ſuppliant, all-protecting Jove,
I beg, behold me at thy feet, infirm,
And wretched as I am, I claſp thy knees;
Leave me not here then, where there is no mark
Of human footſtep; take me to thy home,
Or to Eubœa's port, to OEta, thence
Short is the way to Trachin, or the banks
Of Sperchius' gentle ſtream, to meet my father,
If yet he lives; for, oh! I beg'd him oft
By thoſe who hither came, to fetch me hence.
Or he is dead, or they neglectful bent
Their haſty courſe to their own native ſoil.
Be thou my better guide; pity and ſave
The poor and wretched. Think, my ſon, how frail
And full of danger is the ſtate of man,

Now

*Hide me in any place.* The original ſays, "throw me into the ſink, "foredeck, or ſtern;" there was no neceſſity of ſpecifying theſe in the tranſlation.

*To Eubœa's port &c.* Eubœa was a large iſland in the Ægean ſea, now call'd Negropont. OEta, a mountain in Theſſaly, now call'd Bunina.

Now proſp'rous, now adverſe; who feels no ills
Shou'd therefore fear them; and when fortune ſmiles
Be doubly cautious, leſt deſtruction come
Remorſeleſs on him, and he fall unpitied.

CHORUS.

O! pity him, my lord, for bitt'reſt woes
And trials moſt ſevere he hath recounted;
Far be ſuch ſad diſtreſs from thoſe I love!
O! if thou hat'ſt the baſe Atridæ, now
Revenge thee on them, ſerve their deadlieſt foe;
Bear the poor ſuppliant to his native ſoil;
So ſhalt thou bleſs thy friend, and 'ſcape the wrath
Of the juſt gods, who ſtill protect the wretched.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Your proffer'd kindneſs, friends, may coſt you dear;
When you ſhall feel his dreadful malady
Oppreſs you ſore, you will repent it.

CHORUS.

Never
Shall that reproach be ours.



*When fortune ſmiles, &c.* This is almoſt literally tranſlated, and the exact ſenſe of the original. Brumoy has added "c'eſt alors qu'il eſt beau de ſecourir "les malheureux," "this is the time when it moſt becomes us to ſuccour the "unhappy;" a ſentiment not improper in the mouth of Philoctetes, but which is not in Sophocles.

*O! pity him, &c.* This, in the original, is the antiſtrophe to the little ſong of the chorus, which I took notice of p. 226. The reaſon why I have not put it into the ſame meaſure as the other is ſufficiently obvious.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

In gen'rous pity
Of the afflicted thus to be o'ercome
Were moſt diſgraceful to me; he ſhall go.
May the kind gods ſpeed our departure hence,
And guide our veſſels to the wiſh'd-for ſhore!

PHILOCTETES.

O! happy hour! O! kindeſt, beſt of men!
And you my deareſt friends! how ſhall I thank you?
What ſhall I do to ſhew my grateful heart?
Let us be gone, but O! permit me firſt
To take a laſt farewel of my poor hut,
Where I ſo long have liv'd; perhaps you'll ſay
I muſt have had a noble mind to bear it;
The very ſight to any eyes but mine
Were horrible, but ſad neceſſity
At length prevail'd, and made it pleaſing to me.

CHORUS.

One from our ſhip, my lord, and with him comes
A ſtranger; ſtop a moment till we hear
Their bus'neſs with us.

Enter a SPY in the habit of a merchant, with another Grecian.

SCENE

*The wiſh'd-for ſhore.* ' In the original, ' the place which we wiſh to ſail to.' The expreſſion, we ſee, is purpoſely ambiguous; Neoptolemus means Troy, and Philoctetes underſtands it as ſpoken of Scyros, his native country.

*My poor hut.* The Greek is ἀοικον εἰσοικησιν, ' my uninhabitable habitation;' this would not bear a literal tranſlation.

## SCENE II.

### NEOPTOLEMUS, PHILOCTETES, CHORUS, SPY,

SPY.

Son of great Achilles,
Know, chance alone hath brought me hither, driv'n
By adverſe winds to where thy veſſels lay,
As home I ſail'd from Troy; there did I meet
This my companion, who inform'd me where
Thou might'ſt be found: hence to purſue my courſe
And not to tell thee what concerns thee near
Had been ungen'rous, thou perhaps mean time
Of Greece and of her counſels nought ſuſpecting,
Counſels againſt thee not by threats alone
Or words enforc'd, but now in execution.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Now by my virtue, ſtranger, for thy news
I am much bound to thee, and will repay
Thy ſervice; tell me what the Greeks have done.



*Son of great Achilles, &c.* This ſpy is probably the ſame perſon who made his appearance in the firſt ſcene, and was ſent out to watch for Philoctetes. Ulyſſes ſends him back in the diſguiſe of a merchant, to carry on the plot, and haſten as much as poſſible the departure of Neoptolemus and Philoctetes. Ulyſſes had already deſired Neoptolemus to frame his anſwers according to the hints given him by the ſpy, and to act in concert with him; Neoptolemus, therefore, purpoſely turns the diſcourſe to Ulyſſes, to give the ſpy an opportunity of mentioning his deſign on Philoctetes. He blends truth and falſehood, we ſee, together as artfully as poſſible, which prevents the leaſt ſuſpicion of fraud or treachery,

SPY.

A fleet already ſails to fetch thee back,
Conducted by old Phœnix, and the ſons
Of valiant Theſeus.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Come they then to force me?
Or am I to be won by their perſuaſion?

SPY.

I know not that; you have what I cou'd learn.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

And did th' Atridæ ſend them?

SPY.

Sent they are,
And will be with you ſoon.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

But wherefore then
Came not Ulyſſes? did his courage fail?

SPY.

He, e'er I left the camp, with Diomede
On ſome important embaſſy ſail'd forth
In ſearch——

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Of whom?

SPY.

*The ſons of Theſeus.* Acamas and Demophoon.

SPY.

There was a man——but ſtay,
Who is thy friend here, tell me, but ſpeak ſoftly.

NEOPTOLEMUS. [whiſpering him.

The famous Philoctetes.

SPY.

Ha! begone then,
Aſk me no more; away, immediately.

PHILOCTETES.

What do theſe dark myſterious whiſpers mean?
Concern they me, my ſon?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I know not what
He means to ſay, but I wou'd have him ſpeak
Boldly before us all, whate'er it be.

SPY.

Do not betray me to the Grecian hoſt,
Nor make me ſpeak what I wou'd fain conceal;
I am but poor; they have befriended me.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

In me thou ſeeſt an enemy confeſt
To the Atridæ; this is my beſt friend
Becauſe he hates them too; if thou art mine,
Hide nothing then.

SPY.

SPY.

Conſider firſt.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I have.

SPY.

The blame will be on you.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Why, let it be;

But ſpeak, I charge thee.

SPY.

Since I muſt then, know,
In ſolemn league combin'd, the bold Ulyſſes,
And gallant Diomede have ſworn, by force
Or by perſuaſion to bring back thy friend;
The Grecians heard Laertes' ſon declare
His purpoſe, far more reſolute he ſeem'd
Than Diomede, and ſurer of ſucceſs.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

But why th' Atridæ, after ſo long time,
Again ſhou'd wiſh to ſee this wretched exile,
Whence this deſire? came it from th' angry gods
To puniſh thus their inhumanity?

SPY.

I can inform you; for perhaps from Greece

Of

Of late you have not heard: there was a prophet,
Son of old Priam, Helenus by name,
Him in his midnight walks, the wily chief
Ulyſſes, curſe of ev'ry tongue, eſpy'd;
Took him, and led him captive, to the Greeks
A welcome ſpoil; much he foretold to all,
And added laſt, that Troy ſhou'd never fall
Till Philoctetes from this iſle return'd;
Ulyſſes heard, and inſtant promiſe gave
To fetch him hence; he hop'd by gentle means
To gain him; thoſe ſucceſsleſs, force at laſt
Cou'd but compel him; he wou'd go, he cry'd,
And if he fail'd, his head ſhou'd pay the forfeit.
I've told thee all, and warn thee to be gone,
Thou and thy friend, if thou wou'dſt wiſh to ſave him.

PHILOCTETES.

And does the traytor think he can perſuade me?
As well might he perſuade me to return
From death to life, as his baſe father did.

SPY.

*His father.* Siſyphus; imagined by many to be the father of Ulyſſes: concerning whom, a ſuperſtitious report prevail'd, that having on his death-bed deſired his wife not to bury him, on his arrival in the infernal regions, he complain'd to Pluto of her cruelty, in not performing the funeral obſequies, and was by him permitted, on promiſe of immediate return, to reviſit this world, in order to puniſh her for the neglect; but when he came to earth, being unwilling to go back to Tartarus, he was compell'd by Mercury. It is neceſſary to the underſtanding of Sophocles, that the Engliſh reader ſhou'd be familiar with, and reconciled to all theſe abſurdities contain'd in the mythology and religion of the Greeks.

SPY.

Of that I know not: I muſt to my ſhip;
Farewell, and may the gods protect you both.

[Exit.

PHILOCTETES.

Lead me, expoſe me to the Grecian hoſt!
And cou'd the inſolent Ulyſſes hope
With his ſoft flatt'ries e'er to conquer me?
No; ſooner wou'd I liſten to the voice
Of that fell ſerpent, whoſe envenom'd tongue
Hath lam'd me thus; but what is there he dare not
Or ſay or do? I know he will be here
Ev'n now, depend on't; therefore, let's away;
Quick let the ſea divide us from Ulyſſes;
Let us be gone; for well-tim'd expedition,
The taſk perform'd, brings ſafety and repoſe.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Soon as the wind permits us, we embark,
But now 'tis adverſe.

PHILOCTETES.

Ev'ry wind is fair,
When we are flying from misfortune.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

True;
And 'tis againſt them too.

PHILOC-

PHILOCTETES.

Alas! no ſtorms
Can drive back fraud and rapine from their prey.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I'm ready; take what may be neceſſary,
And follow me.

PHILOCTETES.

I want not much.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Perhaps
My ſhip will furniſh you.

PHILOCTETES.

There is a plant
Which to my wound gives ſome relief; I muſt
Have that.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Is there aught elſe?

PHILOCTETES.

Alas! my bow,
I had forgot; I muſt not loſe that treaſure.

[Philoctetes ſteps towards his grotto, and brings out his bow and arrows.]

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Are theſe the famous arrows then?

PHILOCTETES.

They are.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

And may I be permitted to behold,
To touch, to pay my adoration to them?

PHILOCTETES.

In theſe, my ſon, in ev'ry thing that's mine
Thou haſt a right.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

But if it be a crime,
I wou'd not; otherwiſe——

PHILOCTETES.

O! thou art full
Of piety; in thee it is no crime;
In thee, my friend, by whom alone I look
Once more with pleaſure on the radiant ſun;
By whom I live; who giv'ſt me to return
To my dear father, to my friends, my country.
Sunk as I was beneath my foes, once more
I riſe to triumph o'er them by thy aid;
Behold them, touch them, but return them to me,
And boaſt that virtue which on thee alone
Beſtow'd ſuch honour; virtue made them mine;
I can deny thee nothing: he, whoſe heart

Is grateful, can alone deſerve the name
Of friend, to ev'ry treaſure far ſuperior.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Go in.

PHILOCTETES.

Come with me; for my painful wound
Requires thy friendly hand to help me onward. [Exeunt.

CHORUS.

STROPHE.

Since proud Ixion, doom'd to feel
The tortures of th' eternal wheel,
Bound by the hand of angry Jove,
Receiv'd the due rewards of impious love;
Ne'er was diſtreſs ſo deep or woe ſo great
As on the wretched Philoctetes wait;
Who ever with the juſt and good
Guiltleſs of fraud and rapine ſtood,
And the fair paths of virtue ſtill purſu'd;



*Since proud Ixion, &c.* The ſtory of Ixion, here alluded to, is generally known; to the few, who are unacquainted with it, it may be ſufficient to obſerve, that Ixion was in love with Juno; and for boaſting of that ſucceſs in his amour, which he never met with, was thrown by Jupiter into hell, where, being placed on a wheel encompaſs'd with ſerpents, he was turn'd round without ceaſing.

This ſong of the chorus, agreeably to the precepts of Horace, ariſes immediately from the ſubject, being a pathetic lamentation over Philoctetes; whoſe diſtreſſes are painted in the warmeſt colours, and deſcribed in all the elegance of antient ſimplicity.

Alone on this inhoſpitable ſhore,
Where waves for ever beat, and tempeſts roar;
How cou'd he e'er or hope or comfort know,
Or painful life ſupport beneath ſuch weight of woe!

ANTISTROPHE.

Expos'd to the inclement ſkies,
Deſerted and forlorn he lyes,
No friend or fellow-mourner there,
To ſooth his ſorrows, and divide his care;
Or ſeek the healing plant of pow'r to 'ſwage
His aching wound, and mitigate it's rage;
But if perchance, a-while releas'd
From tort'ring pain, he ſinks to reſt,
Awaken'd ſoon, and by ſharp hunger preſt,
Compell'd to wander forth in ſearch of food,
He crawls in anguiſh to the neighb'ring wood;
Ev'n as the tott'ring infant in deſpair,
Who mourns an abſent mother's kind ſupporting care.

STROPHE II.

The teeming earth, who mortals ſtill ſupplies
With ev'ry good, to him her ſeed denies;
A ſtranger to the joy that flows
From the kind aid which man on man beſtows;
Nor food alas! to him was giv'n,
Save when his arrows pierc'd the birds of heav'n;

Nor

Nor e'er did Bacchus' heart-expanding bowl,
For ten long years relieve his chearleſs ſoul;
But glad was he his eager thirſt to ſlake
In the unwholſome pool, or ever-ſtagnant lake.

ANTISTROPHE II.

But now, behold the joyful captive freed;
A fairer fate, and brighter days ſucceed:
For he at laſt hath found a friend
Of nobleſt race, to ſave and to defend,
To guide him with protecting hand,
And ſafe reſtore him to his native land;
On Sperchius' flow'ry banks to join the throng
Of Melian nymphs, and lead the choral ſong
On OEta's top, which ſaw Alcides riſe,
And from the flaming pile aſcend his native ſkies.

[Exeunt.

*Hath found a friend &c.* Brumoy obſerves on this paſſage, that the chorus, being ſtrongly attach'd to the intereſt of their maſter Neoptolemus, are but the echos of his expreſſions, and though they could not therefore be ignorant of his deſign to carry Philoctetes to Troy inſtead of his native country, they here mention the latter as his real intention, which they muſt be ſuppoſed to do from the fear of being over-heard by Philoctetes, whoſe cave was cloſe to them.

*On Sperchius' banks.* Sperchius was a river in Theſſaly.

*Melian nymphs.* Melos was an iſland near Candy, reckon'd among the Cyclades, and now call'd Milo.

End of ACT II.

## ACT III.

# ACT III.

## SCENE I.

NEOPTOLEMUS, PHILOCTETES, CHORUS.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

COME, Philoctetes; why thus ſilent? wherefore
This ſudden terror on thee?

PHILOCTETES.

Oh!

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Whence is it?

PHILOCTETES.

Nothing; my ſon, go on.

NEOP-

*Nothing, my ſon.* The pains, which Philoctetes felt from his wound, are deſcribed as periodical, returning at certain ſeaſons, and attended with violent agonies and convulſions, which generally terminated in a profuſe diſcharge of matter; the pain then ceaſing, the fatigue occaſion'd by it brought on a gentle ſlumber which relieved him. Philoctetes, feeling the ſymptoms of his diſtemper approaching, endeavours as much as poſſible to conceal his anguiſh, being apprehenſive that his cries and groans might induce Neoptolemus, in ſpite of his promiſe, to leave him behind; he makes ſlight of it therefore, till quite over-power'd by continual torture, he acknowledges himſelf at laſt unable to ſtir. This circumſtance, we may obſerve, is artfully thrown in by the poet, to ſtop the effect of Ulyſſes's ſtratagem, which was juſt on the point of execution, and which, if it ſucceeded, muſt of courſe have put an end to the drama; this accident intervening gives a new turn to the whole, ſerves to introduce the remorſe and repentance of Neoptolemus, gives Ulyſſes an opportunity of appearing, and brings about the cataſtrophe.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Is it thy wound
That pains thee thus?

PHILOCTETES.

No; I am better now.
Oh! gods!

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Why doſt thou call thus on the gods?

PHILOCTETES.

To ſmile propitious, and preſerve us—Oh!

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Thou art in mis'ry. Tell me; wilt thou not?
What is it?

PHILOCTETES.

O! my ſon, I can no longer
Conceal it from thee. O! I dye, I periſh!
By the great gods let me implore thee, now
This moment, if thou haſt a ſword, O! ſtrike,
Cut off this painful limb, and end my being.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

What can this mean, that unexpected thus
It ſhou'd torment thee?

PHILOCTETES.

Know you not, my ſon?

NEOP-

NEOPTOLEMUS.

What is the cauſe?

PHILOCTETES.

Can you not gueſs it?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

No.

PHILOCTETES.

Nor I.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

That's ſtranger ſtill.

PHILOCTETES.

My ſon, my ſon!

NEOPTOLEMUS.

This new attack is terrible indeed!

PHILOCTETES.

'Tis inexpreſſible! have pity on me!

NEOPTOLEMUS.

What ſhall I do?

PHILOCTETES.

Do not be terrify'd,
And leave me: it's returns are regular,
And like the trav'ller, when it's appetite
Is ſatisfy'd, it will depart. Oh! oh!

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Thou art oppreſs'd with ills on ev'ry ſide.
Give me thy hand; come, wilt thou lean upon me?

PHILOCTETES.

No; but theſe arrows, take, preſerve 'em for me
A little while, till I grow better: ſleep
Is coming on me, and my pains will ceaſe.
Let me be quiet; if mean time, our foes
Surprize thee, let nor force nor artifice
Deprive thee of the great, the precious truſt
I have repoſed in thee; that were ruin
To thee, and to thy friend.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Be not afraid,
No hands but mine ſhall touch them; give them to me.

PHILOCTETES.

Receive them, ſon; and let it be thy pray'r
They bring not woes on thee, as they have done
To me, and to Alcides. [Gives him the bow and arrows.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

May the gods
Forbid it ever; may they guide our courſe
And ſpeed our proſp'rous ſails!

PHILOCTETES.

Alas! my ſon,
I fear thy vows are vain; behold my blood
Flows from the wound; O! how it pains me! now,
It comes, it haſtens; do not, do not leave me;
O! that Ulyſſes felt this racking torture,
Ev'n to his inmoſt ſoul! again it comes.
O! Agamemnon, Menelaus, why
Shou'd not you bear theſe pangs as I have done?
O! death, where art thou, death? ſo often call'd,
Wilt thou not liſten? wilt thou never come?
Take thou the Lemnian fire, my gen'rous friend,
Do me the ſame kind office which I did
For my Alcides; theſe are thy reward;
He gave them to me, thou alone deſerv'ſt
The great inheritance. What ſays my friend?
What ſays my dear preſerver? O! where art thou?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I mourn thy hapleſs fate.

PHILOCTETES.

Be of good chear,

Quick

*The Lemnian fire.* Alluding, moſt probably, to the generally-received opinion, that the forges of Vulcan were in the iſland of Lemnos.

*The ſame kind office.* Philoctetes had attended his friend Hercules in his laſt moments, and ſet fire to the funeral pile, when he expired on the top of mount OEta.

Quick my diſorder comes, and goes as ſoon;
I only beg thee not to leave me here.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Depend on't, I will ſtay.

PHILOCTETES.

Wilt thou indeed?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Truſt me, I will.

PHILOCTETES.

I need not bind thee to it
By oath.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

O! no; 'twere impious to forſake thee.

PHILOCTETES.

Give me thy hand, and pledge thy faith.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I do.

PHILOCTETES.

Thither, O! thither lead me. [pointing up to heaven.



*Give me thy hand.* Amongſt the Greeks, in all compacts and agreements, it was uſual to take each other by the right hand, that being the manner of plighting faith; this was always conſider'd by men of character as equally binding with the moſt ſolemn oath; Philoctetes therefore deſires no other aſſurance of the ſincerity of his friend. It is perhaps needleſs here to remark, that this cuſtom has been adopted by the moderns, and is practiſed in almoſt every nation to this day, though it does not amongſt us carry ſo much weight with it, being ſeldom made uſe of in matters of great importance.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

What ſayſt thou? where?

PHILOCTETES.

Up yonder,

Above.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

What, loſt again? why look'ſt thou thus

On that bright circle?

PHILOCTETES.

Let me, let me go.

NEOPTOLEMUS. [lays hold of him.

Where woudſt thou go?

PHILOCTETES.

Looſe me.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I will not.

PHILOCTETES.

Oh!

You'll kill me, if you do not.

NEOPTOLEMUS. [lets him go.

There, then; now

Is thy mind better?

PHILOCTETES.

O! receive me earth;

Receive

Receive a dying man; here muſt I lye;
For O! my pain's ſo great I cannot riſe.
[Philoctetes ſinks down on the earth near the entrance of the cave.]

## SCENE II.

### NEOPTOLEMUS, CHORUS.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Sleep hath o'erta'en him, ſee his head is lain
On the cold earth; the balmy ſweat thick drops
From ev'ry limb, and from the broken vein
Flows the warm blood; let us indulge his ſlumbers.

CHORUS.

(INVOCATION to SLEEP.)

Sleep, thou patron of mankind,
Great phyſician of the mind,
Who doſt nor pain nor ſorrow know,
Sweeteſt balm of ev'ry woe,
Mildeſt ſov'reign, hear us now;
Hear thy wretched ſuppliant's vow;
His eyes in gentle ſlumbers cloſe,
And continue his repoſe;

Hear

*Sleep, thou patron, &c.* Philoctetes, quite faint from exceſs of pain, lays himſelf down on the earth, and ſinks into a ſhort ſlumber; the chorus, with great propriety, fill up the pauſe of action by an invocation to ſleep. In the original, this ſpeech of the chorus, and the next, are in ſtrophe, antiſtrophe, and epode; the reaſon why I have thrown only the firſt part into rhyme muſt be obvious to the judicious reader.

Hear thy wretched ſuppliant's vow,
Great phyſician, hear us now.
And now, my ſon, what beſt may ſuit thy purpoſe
Conſider well, and how we are to act;
What more can we expect? the time is come;
For better far is opportunity
Seiz'd at the lucky hour, than all the counſels
Which wiſdom dictates, or which craft inſpires.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

He hears us not; but eaſy as it is
To gain the prize, it wou'd avail us nothing
Were he not with us; Phœbus hath reſerv'd
For him alone the crown of victory;
But thus to boaſt of what we cou'd not do,
And break our word, were moſt diſgraceful to us.

CHORUS.

The god will guide us, fear it not, my ſon;
But what thou ſay'ſt, ſpeak ſoft, for well thou know'ſt
The ſick man's ſleep is ſhort; he may awake
And hear us, therefore let us hide our purpoſe;
If then thou think'ſt as he does, thou know'ſt whom,

This

*Thou know'ſt whom.* The chorus means Ulyſſes, but is afraid to mention his name, leſt Philoctetes ſhould awake and hear it, which would at once diſcover the whole plot againſt him.

This is the time; at ſuch a time, my ſon,
The wiſeſt err; but mark me, the wind's fair,
And Philoctetes ſleeps, void of all help.
Lame, impotent, unable to reſiſt,
He is as one among the dead; ev'n now
We'll take him with us; 'twere an eaſy taſk.
Leave it to me, my ſon; there is no danger.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

No more; his eyes are open; ſee, he moves.

SCENE III.

PHILOCTETES, NEOPTOLEMUS, CHORUS,

PHILOCTETES. [Awaking.

O! fair returning light! beyond my hope;
You too my kind preſervers! O! my ſon,
I cou'd not think thou wou'dſt have ſtay'd ſo long
In kind compaſſion to thy friend; alas!
Th' Atridæ never wou'd have acted thus;
But noble is thy nature, and thy birth,
And therefore little did my wretchedneſs,

Nor

*O! fair, &c.* Mr. Brumoy here begins his fourth act, which is certainly very abſurd, as there is not the leaſt pauſe of action, or vacancy of ſcene, Philoctetes awaking immediately after the laſt ſpeech of the chorus, who obſerved his eyes opening; beſides that the 3d act is thus render'd moſt prepoſterouſly ſhort; though the French critic remarks, that it is, notwithſtanding, a compleat act; "ſuivant l' idea des Grec," "according to the idea of the Greeks." We will venture however to pronounce, that if the Greeks had divided their tragedies into acts, they would have done it with more judgment.

Nor from my wounds the noiſome ſtench deter
Thy gen'rous heart. I have a little reſpite;
Help me, my ſon; I'll try to riſe; this weakneſs
Will leave me ſoon, and then we'll go together.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I little thought to find thee thus reſtor'd.
Truſt me, I joy to ſee thee free from pain,
And hear thee ſpeak; the marks of death were on thee;
Raiſe thyſelf up; thy friends here, if thou wilt,
Shall carry thee, 'twill be no burthen to them
If we requeſt it.

PHILOCTETES.

No; thy hand alone;
I will not trouble them; 'twill be enough
If they can bear with me and my diſtemper,
When we embark.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Well, be it ſo, but riſe.

PHILOCTETES. [Philoctetes riſes.

O never fear; I'll riſe as well as ever. [Exeunt.

*I'll riſe as well as ever.* The end of the 3d act (if an act there muſt be) may, I think, with greater propriety be placed here; as Philoctetes may be ſuppoſed to creep into his cave to look for the plant which he mention'd, and Neoptolemus to go in with him, ſo that the ſtage would be left void. This act, even thus extended, is not half ſo long as the preceding; the diviſion, however, is better than Brumoy's.

End of ACT III.

ACT IV.

# ACT IV.

## SCENE I.

NEOPTOLEMUS, PHILOCTETES, CHORUS.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

How ſhall I act?

PHILOCTETES.

What ſays my ſon?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Alas!

I know not what to ſay; my doubtful mind——

PHILOCTETES.

Talk'd you of doubts? you did not ſurely,

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Ay,

That's my misfortune.



*How ſhall I act?* Neoptolemus, who, as I before obſerved, is deſcribed to us as of an honeſt and ingenuous diſpoſition, being deeply affected by the diſtreſs and anguiſh of Philoctetes, ſoften'd at the ſame time by the confidence which this unhappy man had repoſed in him, and reflecting on the ſolemn contract he had juſt made, is ſtruck with horror and remorſe at the thought of ſuch treachery and baſeneſs; he advances in a penſive poſture, and ſpeaks to himſelf without regarding Philoctetes, who is at a loſs to comprehend him, till at laſt he opens his heart and confeſſes the deſign; this gives a new and ſudden turn to the plot, and prepares the neceſſary appearance of Ulyſſes. Thus does every circumſtance in this excellent tragedy ariſe naturally from that which goes before it, and all the various parts of the edifice contribute to the ſtrength, ſymmetry and beauty of the whole.

PHILOCTETES.

Is then my diſtreſs
The cauſe at laſt you will not take me with you?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

All is diſtreſs and mis'ry, when we act
Againſt our nature, and conſent to ill.

PHILOCTETES.

But ſure to help a good man in misfortunes
Is not againſt thy nature.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Men will call me
A villain; that diſtracts me.

PHILOCTETES.

Not for this;
For what thou mean'ſt to do, thou may'ſt deſerve it.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

What ſhall I do? direct me, Jove! To hide
What I ſhou'd ſpeak, and tell a baſe untruth;
'Tis double guilt.

PHILOCTETES.

He purpoſes at laſt,
I fear it much, to leave me.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Leave thee? No.

But how to make thee go with pleaſure hence,
There I'm diſtreſs'd.

PHILOCTETES.

I underſtand thee not;
What means my ſon?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I can no longer hide
The dreadful ſecret from thee; thou art going
To Troy, ev'n to the Greeks, to the Atridæ.

PHILOCTETES.

Alas! what ſay'ſt thou?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Do not weep, but hear me.

PHILOCTETES.

What muſt I hear? what will you do with me?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Firſt, ſet thee free; then carry thee, my friend,
To conquer Troy.

PHILOCTETES.

Is this indeed thy purpoſe?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

This am I bound to do.

PHILOCTETES.

Then I am loſt,
Undone, betray'd; canſt thou, my friend, do this?

Give me my arms again.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

It cannot be.

I muſt obey the pow'rs who ſent me hither;
Juſtice injoins; the common cauſe demands it.

PHILOCTETES.

Thou worſt of men, thou vile artificer
Of fraud moſt infamous, what haſt thou done?
How have I been deceiv'd? doſt thou not bluſh
To look upon me, to behold me thus
Beneath thy feet imploring? baſe betrayer!
To rob me of my bow, the means of life,
The only means; give 'em, reſtore 'em to me;
Do not take all: alas! he hears me not,
Nor deigns to ſpeak, but caſts an angry look
That ſays, I never ſhall be free again.
O! mountains, rivers, rocks, and ſavage herds!

To

*Thou worſt of men.* The original is ω πυρ συ, which, according to the ſcholiaſt, was meant for a pun on the word Πυρρος, Pyrrhus, the firſt and proper name of Neoptolemus. Brumoy tranſlates it, O! rage digne de ton nom'. I thought ſo poor a quibble might as well be omitted.

*He hears me not.* Neoptolemus repenting of his perfidy and loſt in thought, is debating within himſelf, whether he ſhall reſtore the arrows to Philoctetes; he walks about therefore in great agitation of mind, and gives no attention to what is ſaid to him; this whole ſcene is full of action, and the variety of paſſions, expreſs'd in the countenance and geſture of both, muſt have had a fine effect in the repreſentation.

To you I ſpeak, to you alone I now
Muſt breathe my ſorrows; you are wont to hear
My ſad complaints, and I will tell you all
That I have ſuffer'd from Achilles' ſon;
Who, bound by ſolemn oath to bear me hence
To my dear native ſoil, now ſails for Troy.
The perjur'd wretch firſt gave his plighted hand,
Then ſtole the ſacred arrows of my friend,
The ſon of Jove, the great Alcides; thoſe
He means to ſhew the Greeks, to ſnatch me hence,
And boaſt his prize; as if poor Philoctetes,
This empty ſhade, were worthy of his arm;
Had I been what I was, he ne'er had thus
Subdu'd me, and ev'n now to fraud alone
He owes the conqueſt; I have been betray'd.
Give me my arms again, and be thyſelf
Once more; O! ſpeak; thou wilt not; then I'm loſt.
O! my poor hut! again I come to thee,
Naked and deſtitute of food, once more
Receive me, here to dye; for now, no longer
Shall my ſwift arrow reach the flying prey,
Or on the mountains pierce the wand'ring herd;
I ſhall myſelf afford a banquet now
To thoſe I us'd to feed on; they the hunters,

And I their eaſy prey; ſo ſhall the blood
Which I ſo oft have ſhed be paid by mine;
And all this too from him whom once I deem'd
Stranger to fraud, nor capable of ill;
And yet I will not curſe thee, till I know
Whether thou ſtill retain'ſt thy horrid purpoſe,
Or doſt repent thee of it; if thou doſt not,
Deſtruction wait thee.

CHORUS.

We attend your pleaſure,
My royal lord, we muſt be gone; determine
To leave, or take him with us.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

His diſtreſs
Doth move me much; truſt me, I long have felt
Compaſſion for him.

PHILOCTETES.

O! then by the gods
Pity me now, my ſon, nor let mankind
Reproach thee for a fraud ſo baſe.

NEOP-

*We attend your pleaſure.* Brumoy ſends off the chorus towards the ſea-ſhore immediately after the words "when we embark," p. 256, and brings them back again in this place, as ſent by Ulyſſes to know the reaſon of Neoptolemus's delay. This departure and return of the chorus, which is a mere conjecture of Brumoy's, is, I think, unneceſſary; beſides that it is not agreeable to the conduct generally obſerved by Sophocles, whoſe chorus's always continue on the ſtage, unleſs on ſome very important occaſion,

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Alas!

What ſhall I do? wou'd I were ſtill at Scyros,
For I am moſt unhappy.

PHILOCTETES.

O! my ſon,

Thou art not baſe by nature, but miſguided
By thoſe who are, to deeds unworthy of thee;
Turn then thy fraud on them who beſt deſerve it;
Reſtore my arms, and leave me.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Speak, my friends,

What's to be done?

SCENE II.

PHILOCTETES, NEOPTOLEMUS, CHORUS, ULYSSES.

ULYSSES.

Ha! doſt thou heſitate?
Traitor! be gone. Give me the arms.

PHILOC-

*Speak, my friends.* Neoptolemus, already reſolved to atone for his crime, by reſtoring the arrows, applies to the chorus for their opinion, which he knew would be in favour of Philoctetes. Ulyſſes ſurpriſed at their unexpected delay, and impatient to be gone, leaves his ſhip, and, having overheard Neoptolemus, enters at this important juncture. His ſudden intruſion and haughty behaviour but ſerve to confirm Neoptolemus in his reſolution. Nothing can be better imagined or conducted than the plan of this excellent drama.

PHILOCTETES.

Ah me!

Ulyſſes here?

ULYSSES.

Ay! 'tis Ulyſſes' ſelf

That ſtands before thee,

PHILOCTETES.

Then I'm loſt, betray'd;

This was the cruel ſpoiler.

ULYSSES.

Doubt it not.

'Twas I; I do confeſs it.

PHILOCTETES. [To Neoptolemus.

O! my ſon,

Give me them back.

ULYSSES.

It muſt not be; with them

Thyſelf muſt go; or we ſhall drag thee hence.

PHILOCTETES.

And will they force me? O! thou daring villain!

ULYSSES.

They will, unleſs thou doſt conſent to go.

PHILOCTETES.

Wilt thou, O! Lemnos! wilt thou, mighty Vulcan!

With

With thy all-conqu'ring fire, permit me thus
To be torn from thee?

ULYSSES.

Know, great Jove himſelf
Doth here preſide; he hath decreed thy fate,
I but perform his will.

PHILOCTETES.

Deteſted wretch,
Mak'ſt thou the gods a cover for thy crime?
Do they teach falſehood?

ULYSSES.

No, they taught me truth,
And therefore, hence; that way thy journey lyes. [Pointing

PHILOCTETES. to the ſea.]

It doth not.

ULYSSES.

But, I ſay, it muſt be ſo.

PHILOCTETES.

And Philoctetes then was born a ſlave!
I did not know it.

ULYSSES.

No; I mean to place thee
Ev'n with the nobleſt, ev'n with thoſe by whom
Proud Troy muſt periſh.

PHILOCTETES.

Never will I go,
Befall what may, whilſt this deep cave is open
To bury all my ſorrows.

ULYSSES.

What wou'dſt do?

PHILOCTETES.

Here throw me down, daſh out my deſp'rate brains
Againſt this rock, and ſprinkle it with my blood.

ULYSSES. [To the Chorus.

Seize, and prevent him.

[They ſeize him.

PHILOCTETES.

Manacled! O! hands,
How helpleſs are you now! thoſe arms, which once
Protected, thus torn from you! thou abandon'd, [To Ulyſſes.
Thou ſhameleſs wretch! from whom nor truth nor juſtice,
Nought that becomes the gen'rous mind can flow,
How haſt thou us'd me! how betray'd! ſuborn'd
This ſtranger, this poor youth, who worthier far
To be my friend than thine, was only here
Thy inſtrument; he knew not what he did,
And now, thou ſee'ſt, repents him of the crime,
Which brought ſuch guilt on him, ſuch woes on me.

But

But thy foul ſoul, which from its dark receſs
Trembling looks forth, beheld him void of art,
Unwilling as he was, inſtructed him,
And made him ſoon a maſter in deceit.
I am thy pris'ner now; ev'n now thou mean'ſt
To drag me hence, from this unhappy ſhore
Where firſt thy malice left me, a poor exile,
Deſerted, friendleſs, and tho' living, dead
To all mankind; periſh the vile betrayer!
O! I have curs'd thee often, but the gods
Will never hear the pray'rs of Philoctetes.
Life and its joys are thine; whilſt I unhappy,
Am but the ſcorn of thee, and the Atridæ,
Thy haughty maſters; fraud and force compell'd thee,
Or thou had'ſt never ſail'd with them to Troy.
I lent my willing aid; with ſev'n brave ſhips
I plough'd the main to ſerve 'em; in return
They caſt me forth, diſgrac'd me, left me here;
Thou ſay'ſt they did it; they impute the crime



*From its dark receſs, &c.* The Greek is δια μυχων ϑλεπων', 'per latebras 'proſpiciens;' the expreſſion is remarkable, and the tranſlation therefore almoſt literal.

*Fraud and force compell'd thee.* Ulyſſes, unwilling to go among the other chiefs to the ſiege of Troy, feign'd himſelf mad; but being detected by Palamedes was after all obliged to join them.

To thee; and what will you do with me now?
And whither muſt I go? what end, what purpoſe,
Cou'd urge thee to it? I am nothing, loſt
And dead already; wherefore, tell me, wherefore?
Am I not ſtill the ſame deteſted burthen,
Loathſome and lame? Again muſt Philoctetes
Diſturb your holy rites? If I am with you,
How can you make libations? That was once
Your vile pretence for inhumanity.
O! may you periſh for the deed! The gods
Will grant it ſure, if juſtice be their care,
And that it is, I know. You had not left
Your native ſoil to ſeek a wretch like me,
Had not ſome impulſe from the powr's above
Spite of yourſelves, ordain'd it; O! my country,
And you, O! gods, who look upon this deed,
Puniſh, in pity to me, puniſh all
The guilty band! could I behold them periſh,
My wounds were nothing; that wou'd heal them all.

CHORUS. [to Ulyſſes.

Obſerve, my lord, what bitterneſs of ſoul

His

*Am I not ſtill.* This is mention'd in the firſt ſcene as the reaſon aſſign'd for expoſing Philoctetes on the iſland; the ſarcaſm therefore is juſt and natural.

His words expreſs; he bends not to misfortune,
But ſeems to brave it.

ULYSSES.

I cou'd anſwer him,
Were this a time for words; but now, no more
Than this—I act as beſt befits our purpoſe.
Where virtue, truth, and juſtice are requir'd,
Ulyſſes yields to none: I was not born
To be o'ercome, and yet ſubmit to thee.
Let him remain. Thy arrows ſhall ſuffice;
We want thee not; Teucer can draw thy bow
As well as thou; myſelf, with equal ſtrength
Can aim the deadly ſhaft, with equal ſkill.
What cou'd thy preſence do? let Lemnos keep thee.
Farewel! perhaps the honours, once deſign'd
For thee, may be reſerv'd to grace Ulyſſes.

PHILOCTETES.

Alas! ſhall Greece then ſee my deadlieſt foe
Adorn'd with arms which I alone ſhou'd bear?

ULYSSES.

No more: I muſt be gone.

PHILOC-

*Teucer can draw the bow.* Teucer was accounted one of the beſt archers in the Grecian army, though Menelaus, we may remember, reproaches him for it. See note in Ajax, p. 70.

PHILOCTETES. [to Neoptolemus.

Son of Achilles,

Thou wilt not leave me too? I muſt not loſe
Thy converſe, thy aſſiſtance.

ULYSSES. [to Neoptolemus.

Look not on him;

Away, I charge thee; 'twou'd be fatal to us.

PHILOCTETES. [to the chorus.

Will you forſake me, friends? dwells no compaſſion
Within your breaſts for me?

CHORUS. [pointing to Neopt.

He is our maſter,

We ſpeak and act but as his will directs.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I know he will upbraid me for this weakneſs,
But 'tis my nature, and I muſt conſent,
Since Philoctetes aſks it; ſtay you with him,
Till to the gods our pious pray'rs we offer,
And all things are prepar'd for our departure;
Perhaps, mean time, to better thoughts his mind
May turn relenting; we muſt go: remember
When we ſhall call you, follow inſtantly.

[Exit with Ulyſſes.

SCENE

## SCENE III.

PHILOCTETES, CHORUS.

PHILOCTETES.

O! my poor hut! and is it then decreed
Again I come to thee to part no more?
To end my wretched days in this ſad cave,
The ſcene of all my woes; for whither now
Can I betake me? who will feed, ſupport,
Or cheriſh Philoctetes? not a hope
Remains for me. O! that th' impetuous ſtorms
Wou'd bear me with them to ſome diſtant clime!
For I muſt periſh here.

CHORUS.

Unhappy man!
Thou haſt provok'd thy fate; thyſelf alone
Art to thyſelf a foe, to ſcorn the good,
Which wiſdom bids thee take, and chuſe misfortune.

PHILOCTETES.

Wretch that I am, to periſh here alone.

O!

*O! my poor hut &c.* From this place, to the words 'Ō! ye have brought 'back once more &c.' the Greek is all Strophe and Antiſtrophe, ſet to muſic, and ſung alternately by Philoctetes and the chorus.

*Th' impetuous ſtorms, &c.* The Greek is πτωκαδες or πτωχαδες, which the ſcholiaſts interpret, harpies. Ratallerus and Brumoy, whom I have here follow'd, render it, ſtorms, which is the moſt natural and obvious ſenſe.

O! I ſhall ſee the face of man no more,
Nor ſhall my arrows pierce their winged prey,
And bring me ſuſtenance! ſuch vile deluſions
Us'd to betray me! O! that pains, like thoſe
I feel, might reach the author of my woes!

CHORUS.

The gods decreed it; we are not to blame;
Heap not thy curſes therefore on the guiltleſs,
But take our friendſhip.

PHILOCTETES.

[pointing to the ſea-ſhore.

I behold him there;
Ev'n now I ſee him laughing me to ſcorn
On yonder ſhore, and in his hand the darts
He waves triumphant, which no arms but theſe
Had ever borne. O! my dear glorious treaſure!
Hadſt thou a mind to feel th' indignity,
How woud'ſt thou grieve to change thy noble maſter,
The friend of great Alcides, for a wretch
So vile, ſo baſe, ſo impious as Ulyſſes!

CHORUS.

Juſtice will ever rule the good man's tongue,
Nor from his lips, reproach and bitterneſs

Invidious

*The author of my woes.* Ulyſſes.

Invidious flow; Ulyſſes, by the voice
Of Greece appointed, only ſought a friend
To join the common cauſe, and ſerve his country.

PHILOCTETES.

Hear me, ye wing'd inhabitants of air,
And you, who on theſe mountains love to feed,
My ſavage prey, whom once I cou'd purſue;
Fearful no more of Philoctetes, fly
This hollow rock, I cannot hurt you now;
You need not dread to enter here; alas!
You now may come, and in your turn regale
On theſe poor limbs, when I ſhall be no more.
Where can I hope for food? or who can breathe
This vital air, when life-preſerving earth
No longer will aſſiſt him?

CHORUS.

By the gods
Let me intreat thee, if thou doſt regard
Our maſter, and thy friend, come to him now,
Whilſt thou mayſt 'ſcape this ſad calamity;
Who but thyſelf wou'd chuſe to be unhappy
That cou'd prevent it?

PHILOCTETES.

O! you have brought back



*Life-preſerving earth.* The Greek is remarkably ſoft and elegant, Βιοδοτειρα αια.

Once more the ſad remembrance of my griefs;
Why, why my friends, wou'd you afflict me thus?

CHORUS.

Afflict thee, how?

PHILOCTETES.

Think you I'll e'er return
To hateful Troy?

CHORUS.

We wou'd adviſe thee to it.

PHILOCTETES.

I'll hear no more. Go, leave me.

CHORUS.

That we ſhall
Moſt gladly; to the ſhips, my friends, away. [Going.
Obey your orders.

PHILOCTETES. [Stops them.

By protecting Jove,
Who hears the ſuppliant's pray'r, do not forſake me.

CHORUS. [Returning.

Be calm then.

PHILOCTETES.

O! my friends! will you then ſtay?
Do, by the gods I beg you.

CHORUS.

CHORUS.

Why that groan?

PHILOCTETES.

Alas! I dye! my wound, my wound! hereafter
What can I do? you will not leave me; hear—

CHORUS.

What can'ſt thou ſay we do not know already?

PHILOCTETES.

O'erwhelm'd by ſuch a ſtorm of griefs as I am,
You ſhou'd not thus reſent a madman's phrenzy.

CHORUS.

Comply then and be happy.

PHILOCTETES.

Never, never;
Be ſure of that; tho' thunder-bearing Jove
Shou'd with his light'nings blaſt me, wou'd I go;
No; let Troy periſh, periſh all the hoſt
Who ſent me here to dye; but O! my friends,
Grant me this laſt requeſt.

CHORUS.

What is it? ſpeak.

PHILOCTETES.

A ſword, a dart, ſome inſtrument of death.



*My wound.* The original is O! my foot, my foot, which the reader may ſubſtitute if he thinks proper.

CHORUS.

What wou'dſt thou do?

PHILOCTETES.

I'd hack off ev'ry limb.

Death, my ſoul longs for death.

CHORUS.

But wherefore is

PHILOCTETES.

I'll ſeek my father.

CHORUS.

Whither?

PHILOCTETES.

In the tomb;

There he muſt be. O! Scyros, O! my country,
How cou'd I bear to ſee thee as I am!
I who had left thy ſacred ſhores to aid
The hateful ſons of Greece! O! miſery! [Goes into the cave.

[Exeunt.

End of ACT IV.

## ACT V.

# ACT V.

## SCENE I.

ULYSSES, NEOPTOLEMUS, CHORUS.

CHORUS.

E'ER now we ſhou'd have ta'en thee to our ſhips,
But that advancing this way I behold
Ulyſſes, and with him Achilles' ſon.

ULYSSES.

Why this return? wherefore this haſte?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I come
To purge me of my crimes.

ULYSSES.

Indeed! what crimes?

NEOP-

*E'er now we ſhou'd &c.* The ſame impropriety, which ſtruck us on the opening of the fourth act, recurs with equal force at the beginning of this. The ſcene is not void, and conſequently no ſuch diviſion can take place. That of Brumoy is ſtill more abſurd, which takes in this ſpeech to the fourth act, as if it were poſſible that the chorus ſhould perceive their maſters Ulyſſes and Neoptolemus approaching, and immediately run off the ſtage; it is ſurely much better to make them go in with Philoctetes, and come out again ſpeaking to him ſtill remaining in the cave.

*Why this return &c.* Neoptolemus advances in haſte towards the cave of Philoctetes; Ulyſſes apprehenſive of his deſign, follows and expoſtulates with him.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

My blind obedience to the Grecian hoſt,
And to thy counſels.

ULYSSES.

Haſt thou practic'd aught
Baſe, or unworthy of thee?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Yes, by art
And vile deceit betray'd th' unhappy.

ULYSSES.

Whom?
Alas! what mean you?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Nothing. But the ſon
Of Pæan——

ULYSSES.

Ha! what woud'ſt thou do? my heart
Miſgives me. [aſide.]

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I have ta'en his arms, and now——

ULYSSES.

Thou woud'ſt reſtore them! ſpeak, is that thy purpoſe?
Almighty

*Thou woud'ſt reſtore them.* The reſolution of Neoptolemus to reſtore the arrows to Philoctetes gives a new turn to the plot, diſconcerts the meaſures of Ulyſſes, and awakens the attention of the ſpectator, who expects with eagerneſs the conſequences of it.

Almighty Jove!

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Unjuſtly ſhou'd I keep
Another's right?

ULYSSES.

Now, by the gods, thou mean'ſt
To mock me; doſt thou not?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

If to ſpeak truth
Be mockery.

ULYSSES.

And does Achilles' ſon
Say this to me?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Why force me to repeat
My words ſo often to thee?

ULYSSES.

Once to hear them
Is once indeed too much.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Doubt then no more,
For I have told thee all.

ULYSSES.

There are, remember,

There are, who may prevent thee.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Who ſhall dare
To thwart my purpoſe?

ULYSSES.

All the Grecian hoſt,
And with them, I.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Wiſe as thou art, Ulyſſes,
Thou talk'ſt moſt idly.

ULYSSES.

Wiſdom is not thine
Either in word or deed.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Know, to be juſt
Is better far than to be wiſe.

ULYSSES.

But where,
Where is the juſtice thus unauthoris'd
To give a treaſure back thou ow'ſt to me,
And to my counſels?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I have done a wrong,
And I will try to make atonement for it.

ULYSSES.

Doſt thou not fear the pow'r of Greece?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I fear

Nor Greece, nor thee, when I am doing right.

ULYSSES.

'Tis not with Troy then we contend, but thee.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I know not that.

ULYSSES.

See'ſt thou this hand? behold

It graſps my ſword.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Mine is alike prepar'd

Nor ſeeks delay.

ULYSSES.

But I will let thee go;

Greece ſhall know all thy guilt, and ſhall revenge it.

[Exit Ulyſſes.



*I will let thee go.* Brumoy, whoſe notions of honour are perhaps a little too modern on the occaſion, is ſhock'd at this appearance of cowardice in Ulyſſes, who after thus exaſperating Neoptolemus, inſtead of reſenting his cavalier treatment, very prudently retires, with a threat to tell the Grecians of his ill behaviour. The conduct of Sophocles in this particular is, notwithſtanding, unexceptionable; for, however unavoidable a duel might have been on the French ſtage in ſuch a circumſtance, the antients did not ſee the neceſſity

## SCENE II.

NEOPTOLEMUS, CHORUS.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

'Twas well determin'd; always be as wiſe
As now thou art, and thou may'ſt live in ſafety.
[approaching toward the cave.
Ho! ſon of Pæan! Philoctetes, leave
Thy rocky habitation, and come forth.

PHILOCTETES. [from the cave.

What noiſe was that? who calls on Philoctetes?
[he comes out.

## SCENE III.

PHILOCTETES, NEOPTOLEMUS, CHORUS.

PHILOCTETES.

Alas! what wou'd you, ſtrangers? are you come
To heap freſh mis'ries on me?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Be of comfort,
And hear the tidings which I bring.

PHILOCTETES.

I dare not;

Thy

ceſſity of it; their heroes, as we find in Homer, bore a great deal of bad language from each other without drawing their ſwords. It would therefore have been highly inconſiſtent with the character of the prudent Ulyſſes to have quarrel'd and fought with his friend, and thus put an end at once to the whole ſcheme of his expedition.

Thy flatt'ring tongue already hath betray'd me.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

And is there then no room for penitence?

PHILOCTETES.

Such were thy words, when, ſeemingly ſincere,
Yet meaning ill, thou ſtol'ſt my arms away.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

But now it is not ſo. I only came
To know if thou art reſolute to ſtay,
Or ſail with us.

PHILOCTETES.

No more of that; 'tis vain
And uſeleſs all.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Art thou then fix'd?

PHILOCTETES.

I am;
It is impoſſible to ſay how firmly.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I thought I cou'd have mov'd thee, but I've done.

PHILOCTETES.

'Tis well thou haſt; thy labour had been vain;
For never cou'd my ſoul eſteem the man
Who rob'd me of my deareſt, beſt poſſeſſion,

And now wou'd have me liſten to his counſels;
Unworthy offspring of the beſt of men!
Periſh th' Atridæ! periſh firſt Ulyſſes!
Periſh thyſelf!

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Withhold thy imprecations,
And take thy arrows back.

PHILOCTETES.

A ſecond time
Woud'ſt thou deceive me?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

By th' almighty pow'r
Of ſacred Jove I ſwear.

PHILOCTETES.

O! joyful ſound!
If thou ſay'ſt truly.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Let my actions ſpeak.
Stretch forth thy hand, and take thy arms again.

[gives him the arrows.

SCENE IV.

ULYSSES, PHILOCTETES, NEOPTOLEMUS, CHORUS.

ULYSSES.

Witneſs ye gods, here in the name of Greece

And

And the Atridæ, I forbid it.

PHILOCTETES.

Ha!

What voice is that? Ulyſſes?

ULYSSES.

Ay, 'tis I,

I who perforce will carry thee to Troy

Spite of Achilles' ſon.

PHILOCTETES.

[raiſing his arm as intending to throw an arrow at Ulyſſes.

Not if I aim

This ſhaft aright.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Now by the gods I beg thee

Stop thy raſh hand. [laying hold of him.

PHILOC

*Not if I aim, &c.* Ulyſſes, ſtrongly oppoſing and proteſting againſt the reſtitution of the arrows, Philoctetes no ſooner regains them than, warm with reſentment, he aims an arrow at his breaſt, but is withheld by Neoptolemus. Mr. de Fenelon, in his Telemaque, has varied a little from Sophocles in this particular. He ſuppoſes Ulyſſes to have made a ſign to Neoptolemus to reſtore the arrows; and that Philoctetes notwithſtanding, in the heat of paſſion, drew the bow againſt his enemy, but was ſtop'd by Neoptolemus. 'I was aſhamed 'of myſelf, ſays Philoctetes (ſee Tel. b. 15) for thus uſing my arrows againſt 'him who had reſtored them to me, and at the ſame time could not bear the 'thought of being indebted for any thing to a man whom I ſo abhor'd.' This, as Brumoy judiciouſly obſerves, is ſpirited, but not agreeable to the conduct of Sophocles; as the propriety of character is deſtroy'd by making Ulyſſes conſent to the reſtoration of the arrows, and likewiſe by the ungenerous behaviour of Philoctetes in endeavouring to kill his benefactor.

PHILOCTETES.

Let go my arm.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I will not;

Shall I not ſlay my enemy?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

O! no,

'Twou'd caſt diſhonour on us both.

PHILOCTETES.

Thou know'ſt

Theſe Grecian chiefs are loud pretending boaſters,

Brave but in tongue, and cowards in the field.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I know it; but remember, I reſtor'd

Thy arrows to thee, and thou haſt no cauſe

For rage, or for complaint againſt thy friend.

PHILOCTETES.

I own thy goodneſs; thou haſt ſhewn thyſelf

Worthy thy birth, no ſon of Siſyphus,

But of Achilles, who on earth preſerv'd

A fame unſpotted, and amongſt the dead

Still ſhines ſuperior, an illuſtrious ſhade.

NEOP

*No ſon of Siſyphus.* See note p. 228. The injuries he had received from Ulyſſes are always uppermoſt in his thoughts, and he takes every opportunity of ſhewing his reſentment of them.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Joyful I thank thee for a father's praiſe,
And for my own; but liſten to my words,
And mark me well; misfortunes, which the gods
Inflict on mortals, they perforce muſt bear,
But when oppreſs'd by voluntary woes
They make themſelves unhappy; they deſerve not
Our pity or our pardon; ſuch art thou;
Thy ſavage ſoul, impatient of advice,
Rejects the wholeſome counſel of thy friend,
And treats him like a foe; but I will ſpeak,
Jove be my witneſs! therefore hear my words,
And grave them in thy heart; the dire diſeaſe
Thou long haſt ſuffer'd is from angry heav'n,
Which thus afflicts thee for thy raſh approach
To the fell ſerpent, which on Chryſa's ſhore
Watch'd o'er the ſacred treaſures; know beſide,
That whilſt the ſun in yonder eaſt ſhall riſe,
Or in the weſt decline, diſtemper'd ſtill
Thou ever ſhalt remain, unleſs to Troy
Thy willing mind tranſport thee; there the ſons
Of Æſculapius ſhall reſtore thee, there
By my aſſiſtance ſhalt thou conquer Troy;



*On Chryſa's ſhore.* See the firſt note, p. 201.

I know it well; for that prophetic ſage,
The Trojan captive Helenus, foretold
It ſhou'd be ſo; 'proud Troy (he added then)
'This very year muſt fall, if not, my life
'Shall anſwer for the falſehood:' therefore yield;
Thus to be deem'd the firſt of Grecians, thus
By Pæan's fav'rite ſons to be reſtor'd,
And thus mark'd out the conqueror of Troy,
Is ſure diſtinguiſh'd happineſs.

PHILOCTETES.

O! life
Deteſted, why wilt thou ſtill keep me here!
Why not diſmiſs me to the tomb? alas!
What can I do? how can I diſbelieve
My gen'rous friend? I muſt conſent, and yet
Can I do this, and look upon the ſun?
Can I behold my friends, will they forgive,
Will they aſſociate with me after this?
And you, ye heav'nly orbs that roll around me,

How

*How can I diſbelieve, &c* Philoctetes, moved by the generoſity of Neoptolemus in reſtoring the arrows, is almoſt perſuaded to lay aſide his reſentment and ſail for Troy, but at the ſame time cannot bear the thought of joining Ulyſſes and the Atridæ; this doubt and uncertainty cauſes a new ſituation in the drama, which keeps up the attention of the audience. One cannot help obſerving with what a variety of intereſting circumſtances Sophocles has contrived to embelliſh a ſubject ſo ſimple as to appear at firſt ſight incapable of admitting any.

How will you bear to ſee me link'd with thoſe
Who have deſtroy'd me, ev'n the ſons of Atreus,
Ev'n with Ulyſſes, ſource of all my woes?
My ſuff'rings paſt I cou'd forget, but O!
I dread the woes to come, for well I know
When once the mind's corrupted, it brings forth
Unnumber'd crimes, and ills to ills ſucceed.
It moves my wonder much, that thou, my friend,
Shou'dſt thus adviſe me, whom it ill becomes
To think of Troy; I rather had believ'd
Thou wou'dſt have ſent me far, far off from thoſe
Who have defrauded thee of thy juſt right,
And gave thy arms away; are theſe the men
Whom thou wou'dſt ſerve? whom thou wou'dſt thus compel me
To ſave and to defend? it muſt not be.
Remember, O! my ſon, the ſolemn oath
Thou gav'ſt to bear me to my native ſoil;
Do this, my friend, remain thyſelf at Scyros,
And leave theſe wretches to be wretched ſtill.
Thus ſhalt thou merit double thanks, from me,
And from my father; nor by ſuccour giv'n
To vile betrayers, prove thyſelf as vile.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Thou ſay'ſt moſt truly; yet confide in heav'n,

Truſt to thy friend, and leave this hated place.

PHILOCTETES.

Leave it? for whom? for Troy and the Atridæ?
Theſe wounds forbid it.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

They ſhall all be heal'd,
Where I will carry thee.

PHILOCTETES.

An idle tale
Thou tell'ſt me, ſurely, doſt thou not?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I ſpeak
What beſt may ſerve us both.

PHILOCTETES.

But, ſpeaking thus,
Doſt thou not fear th' offended gods?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Why fear them?
Can I offend the gods by doing good?

PHILOCTETES.

What good? to whom? to me or to th' Atridæ?

NEOPTOLEMUS.

I am thy friend, and therefore wou'd perſuade thee.

PHILOCTETES.

And therefore give me to my foes.

NEOP-

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Alas!

Let not misfortunes thus tranſport thy ſoul
To rage and bitterneſs.

PHILOCTETES.

Thou woud'ſt deſtroy me:

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Thou know'ſt me not.

PHILOCTETES.

I know th' Atridæ well,
Who left me here.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

They did; yet they perhaps,
Ev'n they, O! Philoctetes, may preſerve thee.

PHILOCTETES.

I never will to Troy.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

What's to be done?
Since I can ne'er perſuade thee, I ſubmit;
Live on in miſery.

PHILOCTETES.

Then, let me ſuffer;
Suffer I muſt; but, O! perform thy promiſe;
Think on thy plighted faith, and guard me home

Inſtant, my friend, nor ever call back Troy
To my remembrance; I have felt enough
From Troy already.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Let us go, prepare.

PHILOCTETES.

O! glorious ſound!

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Bear thyſelf up.

PHILOCTETES.

I will,
If poſſible.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

But how ſhall I eſcape
The wrath of Greece?

PHILOCTETES.

O! think not of it.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

What
If they ſhou'd waſte my kingdom?

PHILOCTETES.

I'll be there.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Alas! what canſt thou do?

PHILOC-

PHILOCTETES.

And with theſe arrows

Of my Alcides——

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Ha! what ſay'ſt thou?

PHILOCTETES.

Drive

Thy foes before me; not a Greek ſhall dare

Approach thy borders.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

If thou wilt do this,

Salute the earth, and inſtant hence. Away.

SCENE IV.

HERCULES, ULYSSES, NEOPTOLEMUS, PHILOCTETES, CHORUS.

HERCULES deſcends and ſpeaks.

Stay, ſon of Pæan; lo! to thee 'tis giv'n

Once more to ſee and hear thy lov'd Alcides,

Who

*Stay, ſon of Pæan &c.* Hercules after a life ſpent in the laborious ſervice of virtue, was admitted into heaven by his father Jupiter, and rank'd among the gods. Agreeably to his character whilſt upon earth, he leaves the regions of peace and happineſs only to ſerve his country and his friend. To juſtify the poet, with regard to this appearance of a deity, it may not be improper here to obſerve, that Philoctetes is deſcribed as fierce and inexorable, with a mind ſower'd by injuries, and a heart harden'd by calamity; he is not to be ſoften'd by the art and ſubtlety of Ulyſſes, nor ſubdu'd by the honour and generoſity of Neoptolemus; a change of will could not therefore take place

Who for thy ſake hath left yon heav'nly manſions,
And comes to tell thee the decrees of Jove;
To turn thee from the paths thou mean'ſt to tread,
And guide thy footſteps right; therefore attend.
Thou know'ſt what toils, what labours I endur'd,
E'er I by virtue gain'd immortal fame;
Thou too like me by toils muſt riſe to glory;
Thou too, muſt ſuffer, e'er thou can'ſt be happy;
Hence with thy friend to Troy, where honour calls,
Where health awaits thee; where, by virtue rais'd
To higheſt rank, and leader of the war,
Paris, it's hateful author, ſhalt thou ſlay,
Lay waſte proud Troy, and ſend thy trophies home,
Thy valour's due reward, to glad thy ſire
On OEta's top: the gifts which Greece beſtows
Muſt thou reſerve to grace my fun'ral pile,
And be a monument to after ages

Of

place without departing from that propriety of character which Sophocles always religiouſly obſerves. The deſcent of Hercules is, on this account, both neceſſary and beautiful; for though in ſome of the Greek tragedies, the interpoſition of the gods can perhaps hardly be juſtified, the ſevereſt critic will, I believe, here acknowledge the 'dignus vindice nodus' of Horace. To the manner of this appearance and the machinery made uſe of on the occaſion we are left entire ſtrangers; we have no lights from antiquity concerning the decorations of the theatre, and are only told in general, that they were made with the utmoſt ſplendor and magnificence; the character of Hercules during his ſhort ſtay is ſuſtain'd with great dignity; he ſays no more than what is abſolutely neceſſary on the occaſion, and then reaſcends.

Of theſe all-conq'ring arms.——Son of Achilles,
[turning to Neoptolemus.
(For now to thee I ſpeak) remember this,
Without his aid thou can'ſt not conquer Troy,
Nor Philoctetes without thee ſucceed;
Go then, and, like two lions in the field
Roaming for prey, guard ye each other well;
My Æſculapius will I ſend ev'n now
To heal thy wounds; then go, and conquer Troy;
But when you lay the vanquiſh'd city waſte,
Be careful that you venerate the gods;
For far above all other gifts doth Jove,
Th' almighty father, hold true piety;
Whether we live or dye, that ſtill ſurvives
Beyond the reach of fate, and is immortal.

NEOPTOLEMUS.

Once more to let me hear that wiſh'd-for voice,
To ſee thee after ſo long time, was bliſs
I cou'd not hope for. O! I will obey
Thy great commands moſt willingly.

PHILOC-

*Be careful, &c.* This is ſuppoſed by the commentators to convey a kind of prophetic cenſure of Neoptolemus, who after his return to Troy murther'd the aged Priam, even at the altar of Hercæan Jove.

*Whether we live or die, &c.* Whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. St. Paul's epiſtle to the Romans, c. 14, v. 8.

PHILOCTETES.

And I.

HERCULES.

Delay not then; for, lo! a proſp'rous wind
Swells in thy ſail; the time invites, adieu.

[Hercules reaſcends.

SCENE V.

PHILOCTETES, ULYSSES, NEOPTOLEMUS, CHORUS.

PHILOCTETES.

I will but pay my ſalutations here,
And inſtantly depart——To thee, my cave,
Where I ſo long have dwelt, I bid farewel;
And you, ye nymphs, who on the wat'ry plains
Deign to reſide, farewel; farewel the noiſe
Of beating waves, which I ſo oft have heard
From the rough ſea, which by the black winds driv'n
O'erwhelm'd me ſhiv'ring; oft th' Hermæan mount
Echo'd my plaintive voice, by wint'ry ſtorms
Afflicted, and return'd me groan for groan.
Now, ye freſh fountains, each Lycæan ſpring,



*Th' Hermæan mount.* A mountain in Lemnos; though ſome are of opinion that the word Hermæan is only an epithet generally appropriated to mountains, from Hermes or Mercury, the god of hills and groves.

*Each Lycæan ſpring.* Fountains ſacred to Apollo Lycius.

I leave you now; alas! I little thought
To leave you ever; and thou ſea-girt iſle,
Lemnos, farewel; permit me to depart
By thee unblam'd, and with a proſp'rous gale
To go where fate demands, where kindeſt friends
By counſel urge me, where all-powerful Jove
In his unerring wiſdom hath decreed.

CHORUS.

Let us be gone, and to the ocean nymphs
Our humble pray'rs prefer that they wou'd all
Propitious ſmile, and grant us ſafe return.

End of the FIRST VOLUME.

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